
This is a reproduction of a library book that was digitized by Google as part of an ongoing effort to preserve the information in books and make it universally accessible.

GoogleTM books

<http://books.google.com>



WIDENER



HN JCME L

1-455.126



Harvard College Library

FROM

Library of
Catholic University of America

**SOME EVIDENCES OF MYSTICISM
IN ENGLISH POETRY OF THE
NINETEENTH CENTURY**

BY
SISTER MARY PIUS, M.A.
OF
THE SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH OF CARONDELET
SAINT LOUIS, MISSOURI

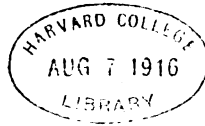
A DISSERTATION

*Submitted to the Catholic Sisters College of the Catholic University
of America in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy*

WASHINGTON, D. C.
JUNE, 1916

Neenan, Mary Paul.

10455.126



Collected by Mary Paul Neenan.

PREFATORY NOTE

The purpose of this study has been to determine the part which that phase of philosophical thought known as mysticism has played as a creative factor in English poetry of the nineteenth century. An effort has been made, first, to reach a definite conclusion as to what the word mysticism connotes, and then to adduce specific instances of this characteristic from the writings of a group of poets selected as being the best exponents of the type of mysticism which they represent. The bibliographies contain only such works as have been of immediate value in preparing this dissertation.

March 19, 1916.

SOME EVIDENCES OF MYSTICISM IN ENGLISH POETRY OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

CONTENTS

	PAGE
CHAPTER I.—Mysticism: Its Definition and History.....	7
CHAPTER II.—The Characteristics of Mysticism.....	17
CHAPTER III.—The Relation between Philosophy and Poetry	24
CHAPTER IV.—Wordsworth: God Sought through Nature...	29
CHAPTER V.—Rossetti: God Sought through Beauty.....	36
CHAPTER VI.—Patmore: God Sought through Human Love.	44
CHAPTER VII.—Francis Thompson: God Sought through Revelation.....	59
CONCLUSION.....	74
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	77

CHAPTER I

MYSTICISM: ITS DEFINITION AND HISTORY

The word "mysticism" is borrowed from the Greek. The *μύσται*, *μεμνημένοι*, were those persons who were privileged to take part in certain ceremonies periodically performed in honor of some god. The word implies two characteristics in those so privileged: first, a special knowledge of divine things, obtained by instruction (*μύω*), and secondly, the ability and the obligation to maintain secrecy concerning these things (*μύω*). "The mystics are, in fact, the inner circle of devotees of any cult; they are possessed of knowledge which partakes of the nature of revelation rather than of acquired science, and which is imparted in consideration of some special aptitude, natural or acquired."¹

So much for the history of the word: the experience itself has been variously defined. St. Bonaventure says, "Sapientia enim haec Mystica Theologica dicitur a Paulo Apostolo edocta, a Dionysio Areopagita suo discipulo, conscripta, quae idem est quod extensio amoris in Deum per amoris desiderium."² Gerson declares, "Theologica mystica est motio anagogica in Deum per amorem fervidum et purum."³ Corderius in the definition "Mystica theologica, si vim nominis attendas designat quandam sacram et arcanam de Deo divinisque rebus notitiam"⁴ points out two striking notes of mysticism, that the knowledge is sacred, and not for all, "arcanam."

L'Abbé Migne gives the following definition. "La mystique est la science d'état surnaturel de l'âme humaine, manifesté dans le corps et dans l'ordre des choses visible par des effets également surnaturels."⁵ In Ribet we find, "La théologie mystique, au point de vue subjectif et expérimental, nous semble pouvoir être définie; une attraction surnaturelle et passive de l'âme, vers Dieu, provenant d'une illumination et d'un embrasse-

¹ Sharpe, *Mysticism: Its True Nature and Value*, London, 1910, Ch. II, p. 1.

² St. Bonaventurae Opera, Quaracchi, 1898, *Mystica Theologica*, Prologus Tomus Octavus, p. 2.

³ Gersonii Joannis, Opera, Parisiis, 1606, *Mysticam Theologiam*, Tertia pars operum, p. 276.

⁴ Corderius, in *Opera S. Dionysii Areopagitas*, Migne, P. G., Paris, 1844, seq., III, 1003.

⁵ Migne, *Dictionnaire de Mystique Chrétienne*, Paris, 1847. Tome Trente-Cinquième, Introduction.

ment intérieurs, qui, préviennent la réflexion, surpassent l'effort humain, et peuvent avoir sur le corps un retentissement merveilleux et irrésistible."⁶

There is implied in all these definitions the idea that mysticism has its origin in "that dim consciousness of the beyond which is a part of our human nature, and which is the raw material of all religion, philosophy, and art."⁷ Undoubtedly, there is a hunger and thirst of the soul, as well as of the body, and the same power which gave the body certain senses, together with a capacity and a tendency to satisfy them, has given the soul certain capacities and tendencies which can be satisfied only by knowledge and love. All philosophy of life, no matter what trend of thought it follows, attempts to satisfy this twofold longing, but mysticism is differentiated from other forms of philosophy in the manner in which it seeks that satisfaction.

The mystic holds as a fundamental truth that back of all the diverse forms of reality is a Unity, and Ultimate Reality, which we call God, and that only through the soul can this truth be comprehended. "Mysticism considers as the end of philosophy, the direct union of the human soul with the divinity through contemplation and love, and attempts to determine the processes and means of realizing this end. This contemplation is not based on a mere analytical knowledge of the Infinite, but on a direct and immediate intuition of the Infinite."⁸

One of the greatest difficulties in the study of mysticism is the lack of anything like historic succession in the development of the movement. Mystics seem immune from the laws that ordinarily govern human expression. "They are philosophers and hermits, unlettered women and profound scholars. They live in modern Paris or medieval England, or the story of their lives can be but faintly discerned through the rich web of Eastern tradition; they are legends of the past; they travel on our railroad carriages with us today. And yet, in spite of the dissimilarity of their origin, there is a wonderful unanimity in their teaching."⁹

The term was first used in the sense in which we now apply it, by the pseudo-Dionysius, probably a Syrian monk of the sixth

⁶ Ribet, *La Mystique Divine*, Paris, 1879, Tome Premier, p. 14.

⁷ Inge, *Christian Mysticism*, London, 1899, Lecture I, p. 5.

⁸ Sauvage, Art, "Mysticism," *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. V, p. 663.

⁹ Thorold, *Introduction to the Dialogues of St. Catherine of Sienna*, London, 1903, p. 10.

century, whose *Mystical Theology* has played so prominent a part in the development of Christian mysticism, but the roots of the thought itself lay in the Oriental religions.¹⁰ Mysticism dominated in the philosophy of ancient Egypt, as is evident from the extravagant symbolism employed. It was a fundamental element in the Taoism of Laotze. The climate and habit of life in India tended to produce passivity, and the Upanishads teach that the soul or spiritual consciousness is the only source of true knowledge. The Hindu thinks of the soul as a great eye in the center of his being, by which he can look outward and penetrate through appearance to reality. Hence, despising matter, he bends all his faculties within his spiritual consciousness, and so becomes one with Brahman, the universal soul. There is not a great deal of this thought in Greece until Plato, to whom the desire of wisdom, or love of beauty, is nothing but the yearning of the soul to be joined to what is akin to it. Plato is regarded as the source of speculative mysticism in Europe, and in the later Platonic schools contemplation rather than reasoned knowledge became the object of philosophy.

Plotinus (A. D. 204-270) was, perhaps, the most powerful exponent of Neo-Platonism. He was an Egyptian who studied in Alexandria at a time when that city was the greatest center of learning in the world. "The form of his thought is an advanced Platonic idealism combined with the conception of emanations from the Hermetic philosophy, with elements from the mysteries and from oriental cults, but the real inspiration came from his own deep mystical experience of ecstatic union with the One."¹¹ There can be little doubt about the genuineness of his mystical experience, "whether it was no more than a strong emotional realization of intellectual principles obtained by some remarkable philosophical acumen,"¹² or "one of those manifestations of divine grace outside its regular channels, the occurrence of which from time to time has been quite unmistakable."¹³

With Plotinus the end of human life is the purification of the soul and its gradual assimilation with the divinity. His works were collected by his pupil, Porphyry, and arranged in six Enneads.

¹⁰ Cf. Spurgeon, *Mysticism in English Literature*, London, 1913, Introduction, p. 15.

¹¹ Bailey, *Milton and Jakob Boehme*, Oxford University Press, 1914, p. 65.

¹² Sharpe, *Op. cit.*, p. 155.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 156.

Here he teaches that "Three roads lead to God—art, love, and philosophy. The artist seeks for the Idea in its sensible manifestations; the lover seeks it in the human soul; the philosopher seeks for it in the sphere in which it dwells without alloy—in the intelligible world and in God."¹⁴

The teachings of Plotinus, transmitted through St. Augustine (354–430), and Dionysius, exercised an immense influence on Christian mysticism. While the Fathers recognized and gladly incorporated in their philosophy what they knew to be true in pagan thought, yet they maintained the essential inability of the mind to penetrate, of itself, and without divine illumination, the mysteries of divine love. St. Augustine expressly teaches that we can know the essence of things in "rationibus aeternis" yet the data for the knowledge must be supplied by the senses.¹⁵

Mysticism, as implying a peculiar aptitude for certain states of mind not commonly enjoyed by the multitude, existed in the Church from the beginning. The Apostles were mystics in the truest sense. St. Paul, writing to the Philippians styles himself a "μεμνημένος,"¹⁶ and certain prayers in the Liturgy of the Mass are still said *μυστικῶς*. Harnack, in his *Mission and Expansion of Christianity* declares this to be one of its sources of power and appeal, that "It has mysteries of its own, which it sought to fathom, only to adore them again in silence; and secondly, that it preached to the perfect in another and a deeper sense than it did to simple folk."¹⁷ The tradition was carried on by Clement of Alexandria, by the Shepherd of Hermas, by St. Ignatius, who styled himself *θεοφόρος*, the God-bearer, thus laying claim to intimate mystical experience.

About the middle of the ninth century the works of Dionysius were translated from Greek into Latin by the great Irish scholar and philosopher, John Scotus Eriugena, and in this form they were a mighty factor in determining the life and thought of the Middle Ages. Through the teachings of William of Champeaux (1070–1121), the movement gained strength in France during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. It numbered among its defenders St. Bernard of Clairvaux (1091–1153), and the group of mystical philosophers known as the Victorines. In them mysticism took

¹⁴ *Enneads* I, 3, translated by Taylor, London, 1817.

¹⁵ Cf. *Quaestiones* LXXXIII, C, XLVI.

¹⁶ *Phil.*, IV, 12.

¹⁷ Harnack, *Mission and Expansion of Christianity*, Vol. II, p. 237.

its place as a regularly organized science.¹⁸ They had the medieval passion for allegory, and the scholastic love for classification, and so they divide the stages of contemplation, the states of the soul, and the degrees of divine love, and make them conform to the mystic numbers seven, four, and three.¹⁹ Their writings do not appeal to modern readers, but they were vitally influential in conditioning the development of later mystics. Their works, and those of St. Bernard, were translated into English in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, probably by the unknown author of the "Cloud of Unknowing." In St. Bernard, and Richard of St. Victor we have two strong figures, the one a type of the political mystic, the other of the intellectual.

In the same century there appeared in Germany a line of women mystics not less remarkable for spiritual intuition than for literary ability. St. Hildegarde²⁰ (1098–1179) and St. Elizabeth of Schoenau (1138–1165), were able representatives of that mysticism which prompts to energetic public service in a good cause, and of which St. Catherine of Sienna is the most familiar example. St. Hildegarde sent her letters like firebrands over Europe, striving to enkindle in indifferent rulers and sluggish people something of her own enthusiastic idealism.

In the next century we find three women of genius, whose home was in the Benedictine Convent of Helfta,²¹ recording their mystical experience in no mean literary form. St. Gertrude, more absorbed in her subjective experience than St. Mechtilde of Hackborn (d. 1310), is a characteristic Catholic mystic of the visionary type. Mechtilde of Magdeburg (1212–1299), is the author of "The Flowing Light of the Godhead" remarkable for poetic beauty and for individuality of expression.²²

The mysticism of St. Francis of Assisi (1182–1226) descended to his spiritual son and biographer, St. Bonaventure (1221–1274), who combined a contemplative nature with vast intellectual powers, and whose teaching, as a consequence, has dominated orthodox mysticism in all succeeding ages.

In the period of transition from the medieval to the modern world all was unrest—men yearned after they knew not what, and

¹⁸ Cf. Turner, *History of Philosophy*, New York, 1903, p. 303.

¹⁹ Cf. Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, Paris, 1844, seq., t. 175–177–196.

²⁰ Cf. *Ibid.*, t. 197.

²¹ Cf. Robinson, A. M. F., *End of the Middle Ages*, London, 1889, p. 45.

²² Cf. Welch, *Of Six Medieval Women*, London, 1913.

sought for light, they knew not where. The old issues of Nominalism and Realism were revived by William of Ockham (1280–1349), Albert of Saxony (d. 1390), and Peter D'Ailly (1350–1425). An abundance of error crept into their teachings, actuated as they were by a spirit of intellectual pride. Some turned to the ancient classics for the consolation they sought and attempted to revive pagan ideals.²³ Many, ignorant and obstinate, without either the requisite knowledge or the necessary patience to discover the laws of nature, sought to wrest from her the secrets of which she is possessed, by the process of magic, astrology and simulated intercourse with spirits.²⁴ Others, again, weary of endless disputation, sought knowledge in a truer source, in union with the Godhead.

Turner, in his *History of Philosophy*, writing of this period, says: "The revival of the principles of mysticism was a natural result of the decadent condition of philosophy during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The heaping of subtlety on subtlety and the interminable controversies of the advocates of Thomism and Scotism bewildered and disgusted the serious seeker after spiritual light, and drove him eventually to abandon all intellectual philosophy in favor of a life of contemplation and prayer. Many believed with the author of the *Imitation of Christ* that it is better to feel contrition than to know its definition, and that he is very learned indeed who does the will of God and renounces his own will."²⁵ Such was the case in Germany at this time. We see here a group of three mystics,²⁶ Eckhart (1260–1329), Tauler (1300–1360), and Suso (1300–1365), all three Dominicans, all living and working near the Rhine, yet affording a striking contrast. Eckhart was strong intellectually, and by some is looked upon as the founder of German philosophy. He taught that "The light which is the Son of God, and the shining—das Ausscheinen—of that light in the creature world are inseparable. The birth of the Son, and the Creation of the World were one act."²⁷ For this doctrine he was condemned. Tauler was a missionary, possessing

²³ Cf. Weber, *History of Philosophy*, translated by Thilly, New York, 1896, p. 261.

²⁴ Cf. Görres, *Die Christliche Mystik*, Regensburg, 1842, Band IV.

²⁵ Turner, *History of Philosophy*, New York, 1903, p. 411.

²⁶ Cf. Preger, *Geschichte der deutschen Mystik im Mittelalter*, Leipsic, 1874. Erdmann, *History of Philosophy*, translation edited by Hough, London, 1890, p. 548, ff.

²⁷ Stückl, *Geschichte der Philosophie*, Mainz, 1888, par. 3, 6, p. 494.

a broad sympathy with humanity, and a deep spirituality. Suso, whose writings have a simple beauty, was a romantic mystic, deeply concerned with his own soul, and his personal relation with God. Associated with these are the names of Ruysbroek (1293-1381), and Thomas à Kempis (1380-1471), whose *Imitation of Christ* has been a guide and consolation for Christian mystics of widely varying types and ages. His works, together with those of Suso, appear in English manuscript early in the fifteenth century, taking their place by the side of those of Richard Rolle of Hampole (1300-1349). Rolle, who was educated at Oxford, became enamored of the mystic life, and turned hermit. His descriptions of his communion with Divine Love, are touched with a true poetic spirit, and give evidence of an ardent zeal for souls.²⁸

In the British Museum a number of mystical works of the fourteenth century are preserved in manuscript. Among these is *The Cloud of Unknowing*²⁹ whose authorship has never been determined, but which gives evidence of having been largely influenced by Dionysius and the Victorines. Two other famous English mystics belong to this period, Walter Hylton³⁰ (d. 1396), and Julian of Norwich (1343-1413) who in her *Revelations of Divine Love*³¹ exhibits at once the qualities of a poet, a prophet, and a divine lover.

About the same time, another woman of great genius, St. Catherine of Sienna, was proving to the world that in one character, the traits of the visionary and of the practical philanthropist, the constructive thinker and the skilful administrator, may be finely balanced. She was at once politician, teacher, and contemplative, and was able, in her short career, to render a signal service to religion.³²

Denis, the Carthusian (1402-1471),³³ was a theologian, an ardent admirer of the pseudo-Dionysius. His works helped to carry over to the modern world the best traditions of Christian mysticism.

²⁸ Cf. *The Fire of Love and The Mending of Life*, London, 1896, edited by R. Misyer.

²⁹ Cf. Gardner, *The Cell of Self Knowledge*, London, 1910.

³⁰ Cf. Inge, *Studies of English Mystics*, London, 1905.

³¹ Cf. *Revelations of Divine Love*, edited by Warrack, London, 1912.

³² Cf. Gardner, *St. Catherine of Sienna*, London, 1907. *The Divine Dialogues of St. Catherine of Sienna*, translated by Thorold, London, 1896.

³³ Cf. Gurdon, *Art. Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. IV, pp. 734-736. Siegfried, "Dionysius, the Carthusian," *Amer. Eccl. Review*, XXI, 512-527.

Spanish mysticism first found definite expression in the life and writings of St. Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556). His *Spiritual Exercises* are a concrete exposition of the several stages of psychological growth in the life history of every true mystic, and were a formative influence in determining the inner life of that great spiritual teacher, St. Teresa (1515-1582), who with St. John of the Cross (1542-1591), seems destined to remain for all time the sanest type of pure Catholic mystic.

The religious mysticism of the seventeenth century, while represented on the orthodox side by so great a master in the spiritual life as St. Francis of Sales (1567-1622), tended to one of those strange aberrations³⁴ which form a not infrequent phase of its development. Miguel de Molinos³⁵ (1640-1697) and Madam Guyon (1618-1717) taught a practical passivity and repudiation of the body which led to their condemnation by the Church.

Among Protestant mystics we have Sebastian Franck (1500-1543) and Jakob Böhme (1575-1624).

In the philosophy of Descartes (1596-1649), in which all objective knowledge is made subservient to the study of our own consciousness, latent elements of mysticism are contained, which were developed by Pascal (1623-1662), by Geulincx (1625-1669), and Malebranche (1638-1715). In Spinoza (1632-1677) there is a pantheistic mysticism, while from the philosophy of Kant (1724-1804) evolved the romantic mysticism of Fichte (1762-1814), Novalis (1772-1801), and Schelling (1775-1854). It is this aspect of mysticism which through Coleridge, profoundly influenced much of the English literature of the nineteenth century.

A tendency to mysticism as a mental trait is very pronounced in the philosophic thought of the last decade of the nineteenth century, and finds two powerful exponents in Eucken³⁶ and Bergson.³⁷

"Strange as the statement may sound in the midst of the rush and riot of our merely industrial pursuits and ambitions, it is nevertheless true that the spirit of mysticism is in the air. Spiritualism, in most, if not in all of its forms, Christian Science, Theosophy, Buddhism, even Hypnotism in its illegitimate uses, and the many other forms of occultism which prevail today, are simply

³⁴ Cf. Pace, Art. "Quietism," *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. XII, p. 608-610.

³⁵ Cf. Ott, Art. "Molinos," *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. X, p. 105-106.

³⁶ *Der Sinn und Wert des Lebens*, translated by Gibson, London, 1909.

³⁷ Underhill, "Bergson and the Mystics," *English Review*, February, 1912.

diverse practices of a false and reprehensible mysticism. The country is covered with votaries, victims, priests and priestesses of the occult. It is, in fact, a sign of the times. On the other hand, the old heresies have been riddled to pieces by the persistent attacks of modern science, the license of private interpretation, higher criticism, journalistic ridicule, secular education, and the growing contempt in which all shams and pretences in the garb of religion are everywhere held in literature and in the life of the people."³⁸

Tertullian says the soul is by nature Christian,³⁹ and with more truth may it be said that man is naturally curious about God, and everything touching the unseen world; about heaven and hell, the unseen forces of nature, the motor power of his own being, and those vast, undiscovered regions which must be for him, forever unexplored, if reason be his sole guide. Even when he fails to perceive it, or refuses to acknowledge it, in his moments of deep thought there is borne in upon man the conviction that his most substantial interests lie in the direction of the spirit, and that the solution of all the vexing problems of existence lies ultimately in the acceptance of the belief in another world, and in the knowledge and love of God.

"Back of the Rationalism and Agnosticism of the day, may we read a strong religious feeling crying out for life and light and warmth. Could these geniuses ascend the heights traversed by the great intellects—could they see them as Plato saw them, and as Clement and Augustine and Aquinas and à Kempis saw them—they, too, would find that rest and that fulness of life that belong to those dwelling in the broad daylight of God's truth."⁴⁰

Charles Kingsley,⁴¹ in an article contributed to *Fraser* more than fifty years ago, speaks of mysticism as "a mode of thought and feeling now all but extinct in England" yet mysticism was then, as is now, very far from being dead. Mysticism, like other modes of thought which constantly recur, has conquered for itself a place in the human mind, and "the very universality of the tendency argues some want which it fulfills, a capacity of the soul

³⁸ Conway, S. J., "Nature of Catholic Mysticism," *American Catholic Quarterly*, XXX, 683.

³⁹ Cf. Tertulliani Opera, *Libri Apologetici*, cur. E. F. Leopold, Lipsiae, 1839, Pars I, p. 81.

⁴⁰ Azarias, Brother, *Essays Miscellaneous*, Chicago, 1896, p. 170.

⁴¹ Cf. Art. "The New Mysticism," *Quart. Rev.*, CX, 79.

for more perfection than we can obtain through knowledge of created things."⁴²

Ferdinand Brunetière, in *La Renaissance de l'Idéalisme*, tells us that modern mysticism is really a revolt against the hard and dry dicta of the high priests of modern science who attempted to pronounce the death sentence on spiritual philosophy. It takes hold of those who are unwilling to reject the findings of science, yet are eager to discover what is the unknown power which binds together the patent facts and forces of nature; others, perplexed at the potency of evil in individuals, and in the world, are attracted by the refuge it offers; others again are fascinated by occult phenomena, which science has not yet been able to explain. The movement is the result of "the mystical instinct asserting itself against the usurpation of the official philosophy of Positivism; it amounts to an attempt to enter into the "arcana" of nature and human life, which scientific Agnostics definitely refuse to approach; it is an endeavor to indemnify us for the spiritual loss we have sustained or are in danger of sustaining by accepting a purely mechanical view of the universe."⁴³

It is to religion that man looks to cultivate this mystic instinct of his nature. Mysticism follows the lead of religion, and as there is but one true and many false religions, so there is but one true and many false cults of mysticism. All mysticism has in it a strong element of the supernatural, yet this has not always been developed along lines harmonious with reason and revelation.

Before discussing the place which mysticism holds as a creative factor in the poetry of the day, it seems well to consider the characteristics of mysticism, the notes which differentiate the true from the false mysticism, and to call attention to the fact that in the Catholic Church alone can mysticism, in its purest form, exist.

⁴² Sauvage, *Op. cit.*, p. 664.

⁴³ "The New Mysticism," *Op. cit.*, p. 82.

CHAPTER II

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF MYSTICISM

Man is a compound of matter and spirit so substantially united that they act as a unit, and by their action put him in relation with a threefold world—the world of matter, the world of men, and the world of spirits. Yet, notwithstanding their substantial union, mind and matter possess a degree of independence, and a certain power in determining the acts for which they, as a unit, are responsible.⁴⁴ When a balance is preserved, man is said to act normally; but it may so happen that all the life forces are exercised in the benefit of matter, and we have the mere animal life: on the other hand, the spiritual may be so cultivated that the activities of the body are forced to occupy a secondary place, and we have a life analogous to that of pure spirits.

Persons in this condition are possessed of a knowledge and experience foreign to, and beyond, the experience of most men, and inexplicable on natural grounds. Here we have the first note of true mysticism. It is something supernatural, but not unnatural, for “mysticism of every kind is wound up with the dual nature of man, and while it plays with objects and experiences lying above and beyond the sphere of normal human activity, it does not, in any instance, call forth the play of forces the potentiality of which is not rooted in man’s faculties.”⁴⁵

The sphere of man’s activity is manifold, and the phenomena of mysticism appear whenever any element attempts to get into direct and immediate intercourse with an object. When the object sought is God, we have true or divine mysticism: but man may give himself wholly to the study, service, and worship of the forces, mysteries and phenomena of nature, and we have what is called nature-mysticism. This was the mysticism of pagan antiquity, and it is still designated as such by those who “look for mystical knowledge not beyond, but in the material, intellectual and emotional life in which our lot is cast. It regards this world as but a small fragment of a much larger whole, and as made up of many elements all of which are not discoverable, so at least as to be clearly distinguished, by either our bodily or our intellectual

⁴⁴ Cf. *Summa Theol.*, Quaes., LXXVI, translation I, 3, p. 20, ff.

⁴⁵ Conway, S. J., *Op. cit.*, XXX, 685.

faculties. But every part of it is, in this view, connected with and symbolic of something infinitely greater than itself. It embodies and illustrates the operation of vast cosmic laws, it gives evidence of a divine benevolence which reaches further than our utmost vision can follow: it is lit by a ray from the sun of perfect beauty that lies below the horizon of earthly existence."⁴⁶

Inge calls this "the attempt to realize the presence of the living God in the soul and in nature, or more generally, the attempt to realize in thought and feeling, the immanence of the temporal in the eternal, and of the eternal in the temporal."⁴⁷ Those who teach that creatures are but so many mirrors wherein the goodness, and power, and wisdom of God are reflected, and that we have but to look therein to acquire a true knowledge of Him, belong to the cult of nature-mystics. Believing as they do, that everything outward and visible corresponds to some invisible entity which is its spiritual cause, they hold that every new insight into the nature of things is, of itself, a growth in the knowledge and love of the Creator.

There is nothing essentially wrong in this doctrine, for since Nature in all its mysterious forces is the work of God, it can be evil neither in itself nor in its relation to man. There can be no objection to the theory that "something of the nature and will of God can be discerned in all created things, that He is truly reflected in them, and that their reflection can be distinguished with increasing clearness as we draw near to the perfect human state."⁴⁸ The danger lies in mistaking the "vision of Nature" for the "vision of God," and in overlooking the fact that the effects of sin have been felt to the uttermost bounds of creation—that through the fall a double principle has invaded the universe. "Two cities, the city of God and the city of Satan, exist everywhere and always, and man, placed in the midst of their battles finds as well in the evil seeds which sin has deposited in his being, as in the good which remained to him after the fall, attractions which may and do solicit him in one direction as well as in the other, making him party to the powers of evil as well as a votary to the spirits which do the work of God in the world."⁴⁹

God's presence in the world may be considered from two

⁴⁶ Sharpe, *Op. cit.*, p. 9.

⁴⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 5.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁴⁹ Conway, *Op. cit.*, p. 691.

aspects. In one point of view God is everywhere present in creation: He is present as the efficient cause from which everything derives its being; He is present as the intelligent designer and supreme ruler of all that is. He is in the heart of all things, "per essentiam, presentiam et potentiam."⁵⁰ "In Him we live and move and have our being,"⁵¹ yet He is absolutely distinct from all creatures by the very nature of His being, which is absolute and independent. Creatures are necessarily dependent, and are like to God only by virtue of the being which is communicated to them by Him. No intelligence, wisdom, beauty, or power in any degree of perfection whatsoever, can in a creature, give us an adequate idea of the manner in which these attributes are possessed by God. God can be known only by intellectual separation from all creatures, and hence must be apprehended or experienced in a wholly different manner from that in which we experience created existence. Thus God, while said to be immanent in creation, is still transcendent.⁵²

There is another view in which God is said to be immanent in the universe: this holds that God is not only present in the universe, but that he is mingled with it, that God and nature are but two aspects of one substance.⁵³ God cannot be outside Nature, for there is no outside, and He cannot be distinct from it because He is the underlying Reality. Still another view regards Nature as a mode of God's being,⁵⁴ a moment in His self-realization. Nature is identical with God, but God is more than nature, since He is prior to nature in order of thought, though not necessarily in order of time. In this conception creation is a necessary part of God, and He transcends nature only in the sense of being more than, not different from, nature. In either of these views the knowledge of nature is the knowledge of God, the love of nature is the love of God, and the experience of nature is the experience of God. This type of mysticism leads to pantheism, and cannot be reconciled with the Catholic doctrine of the relation between Creator and creature. It is true, God made all things good, but "sin has marred the order of God's creation, has put man in a false relation to all these things; it has given them a hold upon him,

⁵⁰ *Summa. Theol.*, I, VIII, 3.

⁵¹ *Acts*, XVII, 28.

⁵² Cf. Sharpe, *Op. cit.*, p. 138.

⁵³ Cf. Weber, *History of Philosophy*, translated by Thilly, New York, 1896, p. 328.

⁵⁴ Cf. Turner, *History of Philosophy*, New York, 1903, pp. 470-471.

he has sunk under their influence, they have enslaved him; instead of raising him to God, he has allowed them to drag him down, and to blind him, so that he cannot see God.⁵⁵ Man chose the creature before the Creator, and made created things an end in themselves. "They were meant to be channels of approach to God—revelations of God—but the channels have become clogged, the creatures have become opaque, and at last they form a barrier between the soul and God;"⁵⁶ hence the "via Remotionis" of the true mystics. Yet the Catholic mystic no more despises nature than he despises grace. He believes "It is the business of religion to inculcate that view of life which enables us to look out on nature as God's creation, distinct indeed from Him in substance, but filled with the beauty of His presence, and pulsating with the gladness of His beauty and the joy of His supremely perfect life."⁵⁷ Neither does he deny that nature may be a medium between God and man, but he does insist that it is only a medium, and not a self-sufficing one; that to use it effectively the senses must be purified, and hence the doctrine of renunciation and purgation so strenuously insisted on by mystical writers.

The object sought in this renunciation is union with God. "It was not in mere weariness of their fellow men, nor in bitterness of disappointment, nor in ambitious hope of mounting upward unhelped and being like God that they (the mystics), parted with most of the innocent joys of life. They were enamored of the "Divine Cloud," the bright darkness of the Divine mysteries hidden within them; they felt that His Divine Majesty, in the words of Blessed Julian of Norwich, had set up His "See" in their hearts. Their one aim was to blunt the world's after images which haunted their thought, so that, if His majesty thought fit, some passing image might be flashed upon their expectant souls."⁵⁸ For this they were willing and prepared to pass through those stages of development so graphically described by St. Teresa,⁵⁹ St. John of the Cross,⁶⁰ and other mystics.

The first stages of this development are merely negative,

⁵⁵ Maturin, *Some Principles and Practices of the Spiritual Life*, London, 1907, p. 40.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

⁵⁷ Turner, "The Personality of God," *Catholic University Bulletin*, XIV, 184.

⁵⁸ McNabb, *Introduction to the "Anchoresses of the West,"* by Steele, London, 1903, p. XII.

⁵⁹ Cf. *The Interior Castle*, London, 1906.

⁶⁰ Cf. *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, London, 1906.

consisting as they do in the purification of the soul from actual sin, from worldly desires, and from certain entanglements of the will and senses which hold it bound to creatures. The work of sanctification is accomplished through extirpation and spiritual upbuilding. True mysticism is founded on abnegation, which results in a twofold purification, that of the senses and that of the soul. The divine necessity of pain is set forth in the writings of all the mystics: it breathes from every page of the *Imitation*. Tauler has put this beautifully when he makes Christ say, "Learn that My divine nature never worked so nobly in human nature as by suffering: and because suffering is so efficacious, it is sent out of great love. I understand the weakness of human nature at all times, and out of love and righteousness I lay no heavier burden on man than he can bear. The crown must be firmly pressed down that is to bud and blossom in the Eternal presence of My Heavenly Father. The deeper and more supernaturally a man crushes himself beneath all things, the more supernaturally will he be drawn above all things."⁶¹ These sufferings are in a sense self-imposed. The sense of unworthiness which follows the "awakening of the soul," has been called, "the reflex action which follows the first touch of God"⁶² the result of which is a series of strongly marked oscillations between pleasure and pain, well described by St. Augustine when he says, "I was swept up to Thee by Thy Beauty, and torn away from Thee by my own weight."⁶³

The normal course of mysticism proceeds first by way of devout preparation in the discharge of ordinary Christian duties, and the use of the ordinary means of grace; next it leads the soul into the immediate presence of God, as an experienced reality, and not as a concept or imagination; the third stage consists of a progressive union with God. In true mysticism God, not man, is the active force: the soul must be called to this state by God alone, and though she may prepare herself by the ascetic practices of the Christian life, yet she must passively await the moment when God will deign to open to her the inner courts.⁶⁴ In St. Teresa's well known description of the different states, the first three "Mansions" are devoted to preparation: in the fourth there is a blending of

⁶¹ Tauler, *The Inner Way*, New York, 1908, p. 114.

⁶² Underhill, *Mysticism*, London, 1911, p. 243.

⁶³ *Conf.*, Bk. VII, Ch. XVII.

⁶⁴ Cf. Saint Jean de la Croix, *Vive Flamme*, quoted in Saudreau, *Les Degrés de la vie Spirituelle*, Paris, 1903, Tome 2, p. 21.

natural and supernatural prayer, but the prayer of union and spiritual marriage described in the last are wholly supernatural.⁶⁵

Gerson⁶⁶ attempts to define the precise nature of mystical contemplation. He divides the powers of the soul into cognitive and affective: these two work together. Their first function is mere cogitation—discursive consideration of the objects of sense; then comes meditation, or the concentrated application of reason to these objects, and the production by it of the abstract ideas; these, again, can be contemplated by the simple intelligence apart from sense perception. So far all is natural; the cognitive and affective faculties act mutually on one another, and on the objects presented to them. But above all natural objects is the divine presence which is known by special divine favor, not as an abstract idea resulting from meditation, but as the immediate object of love, natural or supernatural.

In its most perfect expression this contemplative knowledge of God is ecstasy. In this state all life seems to go out into the exercise of the illuminated mind: all the elements of being converge toward this one absorbing activity, and the ordinary means through which communion with God was maintained are now, to all intents and purposes, suspended. This is the highest exercise of true mysticism, and from it emanate all the preternatural features of the mystical life.⁶⁷ In these favored hours, according to St. John of the Cross, "the substance of God touches the substance of the soul."⁶⁸ This state is of necessity, of short duration, but from it, "The human soul, fixed at last in God, her true center, slowly feels her way to a perfect equilibrium. All her powers, the mysterious forces of physical instinct, no less than the flights of pure intellect come by degrees to express themselves in their true hierarchy, an order so inevitable in its gradual development, so convincing in its final achievement, that the poet's words are seen to be after all but sober fact:

"By Grace Divine, not otherwise
O Nature, are we thine."⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Cf. St. Teresa, *The Interior Castle*.

⁶⁶ Gerson, *Myst. Theol. Cons.*, IX, XLIII.

⁶⁷ Cf. Ribet, *Op. cit.*, p. 501.

⁶⁸ St. John of the Cross, *The Living Flame of Love*, translated by Lewis, London, 1911, Stanza II, 1, IV.

⁶⁹ Thorold, *Catholic Mysticism*, p. 32.

Mysticism of this sort is of necessity of one piece with Catholic doctrine. He only is a pure mystic whose knowledge is founded on the true idea of God, and upon the perfect expression of God's revelation. This revelation can be truly known only through the Catholic Church, and in consequence, however beautiful, however appealing, may be the hopes held out by nature mystics for a union between God and man through nature, they are doomed to failure. Before the Incarnation there could be no complete union between God and man. The God-man is the perfect expression of mysticism, and through His death the advent of true mysticism was inaugurated.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Cf. Saudreau, *La Voie qui mène à Dieu*, Paris, 1904, Ch. XXXII.

CHAPTER III

THE RELATION BETWEEN PHILOSOPHY AND POETRY

"To make song wait on life, not life on song"⁷¹ is the aim of every true poet. The greater the poet or artist is, the nearer will be his approach to a true expression of life. Arnold says, "The grand power of poetry is its interpretative power: by which I mean not a power in drawing out in black and white an explanation of the mystery of the universe, but the power of so dealing with things as to awaken in us a wonderfully full, new and intimate sense of them, and of our relations with them. When this sense is awakened within us as to objects without us, we feel ourselves to be in contact with the essential nature of these objects, to be no longer bewildered and oppressed by them, but to have their secret, and to be in harmony with them."⁷² Poetry effects this interpretation in two ways: "It interprets by expressing with magical felicity the physiognomy and movement of the outward world, and it interprets by expressing with inspired convictions, the ideas and laws of the inward world of man's moral and spiritual nature. In other words, poetry is interpretative both by having natural magic in it, and by having moral profundity."⁷³ If poets are indeed seers and makers, "if what they make has matter, has weight, if what they see is more than shadow, the poets must reveal the meanings of the life that is about them. Poets cannot be freed from the conditions which attach to the intelligence of man everywhere."⁷⁴

In *Life in Poetry, Law in Taste*, Courthope declares, "I take all great poetry to be, not so much what Plato thought it, the utterance of individual genius, half-inspired, half-insane, as the enduring voice of the soul and conscience of man living in society."⁷⁵ "The common original, then, from which all the arts draw is human life—its mental processes, its spiritual movements, its outward acts issuing from deeper sources; in a word, all that constitutes the inward and essential activity of the soul."⁷⁶ The very nature of

⁷¹ Thompson, Francis, *New Poems*, Boston, 1897, "The Cloud's Swan Song," p. 104.

⁷² Arnold, *Essays in Criticism*, London, 1886, p. 81.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 110–111.

⁷⁴ Dewey, J., "Poetry and Philosophy," *Andover Review*, XVI, 107.

⁷⁵ Courthope, *Life in Poetry, Law in Taste*, London, 1913, pp. 25–26.

⁷⁶ Butcher, *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and the Fine Arts*, London, 1902, p. 124.

poetical conception makes it impossible to deduce a conclusive and fixed definition of poetry. Mackail says, "A thousand definitions have been offered, all varying from one another, sometimes to the extent of not having a single element in common."⁷⁷ For the influence exercised on men by words is greatest and most difficult to estimate or to disentangle when words themselves, the art of language, are the subject matter as well as the medium of the inquiry.⁷⁸ Since "all poetry begins and ends in feeling, to define poetry satisfactorily one must accordingly define the feeling out of which poetry springs, and to which it gives rise; but to do this is not possible; feeling is of such a nature that it cannot be defined; no exact logical definition of it can ever be made; poetry, itself, therefore, can never be satisfactorily or finally defined."⁷⁹ Yet the feeling that is aroused by poetry, or the thought that is conveyed with an emotional setting, is aroused or conveyed through the use of a definite kind of material, and the working out of consistent processes, which are subject to laws.

To present intellectual truths, freed from their emotional setting, is the task of science; science deals with laws and principles, with causes, or explanations; with general assertions, with classes and groups of objects. Poetry deals usually with individual persons, particular experiences, things or events. Emotion connects itself more readily with concrete things, with particular persons or events, than with abstract ideas. Yet the mind process of poetry is of necessity an abstraction, for the mental image is the raw material out of which poetry is made.⁸⁰ "The working out of the author's conceptions is spontaneous and imaginative; they bring into play the conscious intellect, and from the germinal hint or motive build up the masterpiece of thought."⁸¹

The poet, according to Aristotle,⁸² is required to reproduce, not nature itself, but the idea of nature existing in the mind, "for nature in Aristotle is not the outward world of created things: it is the creative force, the productive principle of the universe."⁸³ Ideal life is subject to laws of its own, and Horace, in his *Ars Poetica*, says very justly, "Painters and poets have always been

⁷⁷ Mackail, *Lectures on Poetry*, London, 1911, p. 6.

⁷⁸ Fairchild, *The Making of Poetry*, New York, 1912, p. 11.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ Cf. Fairchild, *Op. cit.*, p. 21.

⁸¹ Stedman, *Nature and Elements of Poetry*, New York, 1892, p. 48.

⁸² Cf. *Poetics*, translated by Butcher, XXV, 2.

⁸³ Butcher, *Op. cit.*, p. 116.

allowed a just freedom of conception; this is an admitted fact, and the critic grants the indulgence that the poet asks."⁸⁴ All that the poet is required to do is to create a perfect illusion, the effect of probability, or in other words, that idea of unity which is the essential condition of organic life.

In every genuinely inspired poetical conception, there are two elements of life, the one universal, the other particular. The universal is the idea of the subject, whatever it may be, as it exists in an undeveloped state in the human mind; the individual element is the particular form and character which is impressed upon the subject by the creative genius of the poet. The subject matter exists not only in the mind of the poet, but, in embryo, in the mind in general: the poet, then, must observe those laws and conditions of ideal life which prepare the imagination of the audience for the reception of his thought. "He must vitalize the inorganic matter already existing in general conceptions, so that his audience will conspire with him in the act of creation."⁸⁵

The poet must have some authority for his attitude toward life. Only when we get at the ideas which the poet applies to life, only when we know the standard by which he criticises and interprets life, are we able to judge of his power. If the ideas which give substance to poetry are only illusive make-ups of the poet's fancy, they can have no claim on our serious attention, much less a power to stay by and to uphold. If the ideas expressed are only will-o'-the-wisps of the poet's fancy with no foundation in truth, they are of no more value than the idle fancies of a diseased brain. "Sometimes imagination invades the sphere of understanding, and seems to discredit its indispensable work. Common sense, we are allowed to infer, is a shallow affair, true insight changes all that. When so applied, poetic activity is not an unmixed good. It loosens our hold on fact, and confines our intelligence, so that we forget that intelligence has itself every prerogative of imagination, and has besides the sanction of practical validity."⁸⁶ But just because poetry "flashes home to us some of the gold which is at the core and heart of our everyday existence, amid the conventionalities and make-believes of our ordinary life"⁸⁷ it is of worth. "Each poet is really an explorer in the realm of thought

⁸⁴ Horace, *Satires and Epistles*, edited by Morris, p. 191.

⁸⁵ Courthope, *Op. cit.*, p. 48.

⁸⁶ Santayana, *Poetry and Religion*, New York, 1900, p. 255.

⁸⁷ Dewey, *Op. cit.*, p. 107.

and feeling, not a creator. The truth is fixed by some power other than himself, other, indeed, than man."⁸⁸

The object of poetry is to bring to the mind of the reader, the realization of an ideal which has either never been in the plane of his activities, or has slipped down from the edge of action, and has ceased to play any part in his daily life. In all periods of social development, mental and spiritual needs occur which are more effectively satisfied through poetry, than in any other way.

There is a common demand that the poet shall be accurate in his representations—he is not to reproduce nature, but in his work he must take cognizance of the human appreciations of nature. Philosophy aims to correct the partiality of particular points of view by means of the standard of totality. The most synthetic and metaphysical minds are those which possess the widest vision. "That which the poet sees, the philosopher must define. That which the poet divines, the philosopher must calculate. The philosopher must dig for that which the poet sees shining through. As the poet transcends thought for the sake of experience, the philosopher must transcend experience for the sake of thought."⁸⁹

The facts of life are not solely the things which we can grasp and handle nor are its utilitarian pursuits confined to mere money getting, scientific cultivation of knowledge, or other such things. Away beyond these in even practical value to the world are "the diligent conservation and cultivation of noble thought and sentiment issuing to noble action, things which are of the very soul and substance of poetry, their natural and true expression, and efficient sustenance,"⁹⁰ but that sustenance must be drawn from the intelligence of the time. The poet draws his material from life; and the life which is nearest the mind of the poet, is life translated into some prevailing theory of philosophy. Centuries of reflection have colored the material he finds at hand, and he must simply assimilate the results of the labor of scientific men and philosophers.

"The poet, though influencing after times, is himself the product of influence; he molds the ideas he finds popular; he is the child of his age. . . . Men's philosophical opinions influence their actions long before they undertake to account to themselves for

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ Perry, Ralph Barton, "Poetry and Philosophy," *Phil. Rev.*, XI, 591.

⁹⁰ Waters, "Religious Element in Modern Poetry," *Cath. World*, 76, 110.

holding them. Religious and philosophical problems of deepest import are one."⁹¹ "Literature is so closely related to the whole movement of life that every decided tendency which it discloses, every dominant impulse which it reveals, may be studied with the certainty that some fact of human experience, some energy of human purpose and desire, lies behind. . . . Great books are not born in the intellect, but in experience, in the contact of mind and heart with the great and terrible facts of life; the great conceptions of literature originate not in the individual mind, but in the soil of common human hopes, loves, fears, aspirations, and sufferings."⁹²

In our own time the objective manner of the earlier poets has given way to a subjectivism significant of a deepening self-consciousness. "No age has ever studied itself with so eager a curiosity as our own. This introspection has impressed itself very strongly upon all contemporary art; it has raised up the literature of locality: the analytical novel; it has turned the rivulet of our poetry almost entirely into the lyric channel, for the lyric is of all poetry the most subjective. It is well for the poet to look into his heart and write, well for him to examine the precise quality of his intent and the technical resources of his craft. The danger is that through looking too precisely, he be smitten with the paralysis of Hamlet. There is danger that he may lose the naked vision of that Beauty, whom we know by her earlier name of Truth."⁹³ To avoid this snare, poetry must be founded on a true philosophy of life, and "a noble religion, which will bear by its immaterial truths, our intellect, conscience, emotions, imagination, and spirit, beyond this world; and yet, by these very truths, set us into the keenest activity in the world for the bettering of the world."⁹⁴

⁹¹ Azarias, Brother, *Philosophy of Literature*, Philadelphia, 1879, p. 48.

⁹² Mabie, *Essays in Literary Interpretation*, New York, 1900, p. 4.

⁹³ Hooker, Brian, "Introspection and Some Recent Poetry," *Forum*, XXXIX, 522.

⁹⁴ Brooke, S. A., *Religion in Literature*, New York, 1901, p. 30.

CHAPTER IV

WORDSWORTH: GOD SOUGHT THROUGH NATURE

Mysticism is essentially, a union with God: that it is much more need not concern us now. There are, however, many kinds of union with God. First, there is the substantial union of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, a union ineffable and incommunicable, into which the Three alone can enter. Secondly, there is the hypostatic or personal union of a created nature with a divine, a privilege which belongs to the adorable Humanity of Jesus Christ alone. Thirdly, there is the causal union which exists between the Creator and all creatures, by virtue of their origin, and their dependence on Him. Fourthly, there is an intellectual and affective union with God, which may be either natural or supernatural.

It is possible that the existence of a Supreme Being, worthy of worship and love, may be discerned by the human mind through a purely natural knowledge of the universe, and from this purely natural knowledge may spring a purely natural love. If we believe that God has revealed Himself otherwise than through nature, another kind of knowledge and love is obtainable—the knowledge of faith, and the love of charity: this supernatural intellectual and affective union with God every soul in a state of grace possesses.⁹⁵ When this union is cultivated, and maintained at its highest plane, when every element in it acts in accordance with reason, and a will founded on God, we have, not the mystical state, indeed, but its forerunner, contemplation.⁹⁶ If God is pleased to lead the soul thus prepared into His immediate presence, and give her an “experimental” knowledge of Himself, we have true mysticism. Reserving until later all discussion as to what evidences of this type of mysticism modern English poetry affords, we shall here concern ourselves with that intellectual and affective union brought about by a contemplation of natural objects, and with the author who has given most pronounced expression to the belief that through Nature man may come into immediate contact with the Divine.

⁹⁵ Cf. Sharpe, *Op. cit.*, pp. 63–64.

⁹⁶ Cf. Lejeune, *An Introduction to the Mystical Life*, translated by Levett, London, 1915, p. 235, ff.

No one at all familiar with the poetry of Wordsworth will deny that he possessed a sort of moral sensitiveness, closely akin to the mystical consciousness, which very early affected his imaginative life, and impelled him to give an ethical interpretation to certain aspects of nature, and to claim for natural beauty an influence above and beyond the aesthetic.⁹⁷ His poetry is, in a very large measure, an account of his own inner experiences; experiences, which, originally sense perceptions, were synthesized through recollection, and given a moral interpretation.

Physical environment has much to do with the mental and spiritual development of every individual. Wordsworth was born and reared in the Lake country,⁹⁸ a region noted for its natural beauty: much of his time, through childhood and youth, up to mature manhood, was spent in the presence of picturesque mountains and sheltered dales, of wild fells, and rapid waterfalls. The religious love and regard which he had for nature are traced by him to these early associations:

"Fair seed-time had my soul, and I grew up,
Fostered alike by beauty and by fear."⁹⁹

It was here, the Derwent, "fairest of all rivers" "loved to blend his murmurs" with his nurse's song, and "sent a voice

That flowed" along his dreams.¹⁰⁰

In the biographical poem, "The Prelude," which Legouis declares less a narrative than a study of origins, less the history of a man than the philosophy of a mind,¹⁰¹ he gives an account of youthful, solitary adventures, wherein he feels himself influenced by strange and obscure agencies which have a direct and decisive effect on his spiritual and imaginative life. One experience after another seems to bear out the sense of something back of reality at once awful and incomprehensible.

When the boy, woodcock catching with his companions by moonlight, is tempted to take more than his share of the spoils, he hears among the solitary hills, "low breathings" coming after him,

⁹⁷ Cf. Sneath, E. H., *Wordsworth, Poet of Nature and Poet of Man*, Boston, 1912, p. 3.

⁹⁸ Cf. Myers, *Life of Wordsworth*, New York, 1887.

⁹⁹ *The Prelude*, Bk. I, 11, 301-303.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 11, 271-274.

¹⁰¹ Legouis, E. H., *The Early Life of William Wordsworth*, translated by J. W. Matthews, London, 1897, p. 14.

“and sounds
Of indistinguishable motion, steps
Almost as silent as the turf they trod.”¹⁰²

the huge black peak seems to stride after him, with “measured motion like a living thing;” his mind

“Worked with a dim and undetermined sense
Of unknown modes of being.”¹⁰³

Nature seemed full of huge and mighty forms, that did not live like men: dim, unseen presences which haunted his boyish sports, and “impressed upon all forms the character of danger and desire.”¹⁰⁴

There can be no doubt as to the light in which Wordsworth himself views these experiences. He holds that for him, Nature was a moral teacher, the moulder of his conscience during those early years: that she enforced her lessons through pain and fear, and through the inspiration of high and enduring things.¹⁰⁵ However greatly he may have exaggerated in later years the impressions then made upon him, we see here the crude beginnings of that spiritual apprehension of Nature which was to form more and more an article of his poetic and philosophical creed.¹⁰⁶ He came to feel that he must

“tread on shadowy ground, must sink
Deep,—and aloft ascending, breathe in worlds,
To which the heaven of heavens is but a veil.”¹⁰⁷

In all this it is evident that Wordsworth, in common with other mystics, had a dim consciousness of some vast power, overshadowing this sense-world of ours, and making itself felt in the soul.¹⁰⁸ But he believed this power to be, not so much behind Nature, as in it. He held that through the contemplation of Nature man “may see into the life of things”¹⁰⁹ as far, perhaps, as beatific vision or prophetic rapture can attain. He would make Nature a revealing agency of the transcendental world, like

¹⁰² *The Prelude*, Bk. I, 11, 323-325.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 1, 392-393.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 1, 471-472.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 1, 409.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Clough, Arthur, *Literary Remains*, London, 1869, Vol. I, p. 310.

¹⁰⁷ *The Excursion*, Preface.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Veitch, *The Theism of Wordsworth*. *Transactions of Wordsworth Society*, No. 8, p. 24.

¹⁰⁹ *Tintern Abbey*, 1, 51.

love or prayer.¹¹⁰ The question arises, can the world of life, and order, and beauty, by which we are surrounded, however studied, however enjoyed, lead us back to that knowledge and love of God which we have lost through sin?

That Christianity is a supernatural system, propounding spiritual aids without which the human race can have no hope of regeneration, Wordsworth nowhere denies, but he nullifies this truth by asserting that man can be restored to a state of primitive purity by a process purely natural, and independent of any superior agency.

"Paradise and groves
Elysian, Fortunate Fields—like those of old
Sought in the Atlantic main: why should they be
A history only of departed things,
Or a mere fiction of what never was?
For the discerning intellect of man
When wedded to this goodly universe
In love and holy passion, shall find these
A simple produce of the common day."¹¹¹

In that portion of Wordsworth's poetry which represents his highest genius, the portion that is most apt to endure for all time, "the capacities of the soul, the exhaustless sympathies of nature, are held up for contemplation, positively declared, persuasively reasoned, skilfully illustrated with the finest trophies of imaginative power. There is no shrinking from conclusions, no extenuation of meaning, but all that is implied in the "high argument" of the perfect sufficiency of nature to the human mind, finds emphatic utterance."¹¹² He asserts the power of the soul to regenerate herself:

"Within the soul a faculty abides
That with interpositions which would hide
And darken, so can deal, that they become
Contingencies of pomp: and seem to exalt
Her native brightness."¹¹³

¹¹⁰ Cf. Myers, F. W. H., *Wordsworth*, New York, 1887, p. 130.

¹¹¹ *The Excursion*, Preface, 11, 47-55.

¹¹² Art. "Wordsworth as a Religious Teacher," *Christian Review*, 16, 434.

¹¹³ *The Excursion*, Bk. IV, 11, 1058-1062.

These interpositions came from Nature—

“The whispering air
Sends inspiration from the shadowy heights
And blind recesses of the caverned rocks.
The little rills, and waters numberless
Inaudible to daylight, blend their notes
With the loud streams.”¹¹⁴

Nature was to Wordsworth

“The nurse, the guide, the guardian of my heart;”¹¹⁵ he commends his sister to a like guardianship, as a sovereign remedy against “all solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief.”¹¹⁶ His highest aspiration for the Cumberland beggar is that he may live and die in the eyes of nature; the most telling incident he can summon to express the degradation of Peter Bell is that the tiny flower by the river’s brim was nothing more to him than a yellow primrose.

In all this Wordsworth was influenced, whether he was aware of it or not, by Rousseau and the Zeit-Geist.¹¹⁷ “A return to Nature” was the gospel of the day. The very atmosphere was charged with it, and Wordsworth was all the more susceptible to its influence because it harmonized with his predispositions and likings.

Emile Legouis, a keen and penetrating critic of the poet, says: “Wordsworth’s surprise and resentment would surely have been provoked had he been told that, at half a century’s distance, and from an European point of view, his work would seem, on the whole, though with several omissions and additions, to be a continuation of the movement initiated by Rousseau. It is, nevertheless, certain that it might be described as an English variety of Rousseau’s well known tenets: he has the same semi-mystical faith in the goodness of nature as well as in the excellence of the child: his ideas on education are almost identical; there are apparent a similar diffidence in respect of the merely intellectual processes in the mind, and an equal trust in the good that may accrue to man from the cultivation of his senses and his feelings. . . . For this reason Wordsworth must be placed by the general historian among the numerous “sons of Rousseau” who form the main battalion of romanticism.”¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 11, 1170–1176.

¹¹⁵ *Tintern Abbey*, 1, 110.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 1, 144.

¹¹⁷ Cf. Caird; Edward, *Essays on Literature and Philosophy*, Glasgow, 1892, pp. 160–162.

¹¹⁸ *Cambridge History of English Literature*, Vol. XI, p. 103.

With Wordsworth this passion for Nature seemed to develop almost into a religion: he was a reverent worshipper at her shrine, and the overpowering vision which he there beheld was for him a tremendous reality, and he felt himself morally commissioned to speak that vision through his art. He was a "dedicated spirit."¹¹⁹

"I, long before the blissful hour arrives,
Would chant, in lonely peace, the spousal verse
Of this great consummation; and, by words
Which speak of nothing more than what we are,
Would I arouse the sensual from their sleep
Of death, and win the vacant and the vain
To noble raptures;"¹²⁰

Natural beauty has had a marked influence on nearly all true mystics. St. Bernard, masterful and rigid ascetic as he was, writing to a young friend, urging him to leave the world and enter a monastery, said: "Experto crede: aliquid amplius inveneris in silvis quam in libris; ligna et lapides docebunt te quod a magistro audire non possis."¹²¹ "Thou wilt find something more in forests than in books: trees and rocks will teach thee what thou canst not learn from masters;" but here St. Bernard was simply making the point that the freer a life is from the complex toils of society, the more easily the soul rises to God. He avows that he, himself, gained his understanding of the Scriptures by prayer and meditation "in silvis et in agris,"¹²² when he had no masters except the oaks and beeches, yet we note that the subject of his meditation was not the oaks and beeches, but the Scriptures.

In the case of the true mystic it is the appreciation of unseen forces within and behind the material world that leads to a love of nature, and the transition is from the supernatural to the natural. Man cannot get a religion out of Nature, nor can she be to him a source of inspiration, unless he come to the spectacle of her with the thought of God already in his heart. The beauty we see in earth and sky is not shed over it by us, nor projected from our souls. "The ideal is not in the soul, it is in the soul's Maker,"¹²³ with whom the soul is created to commune, and we

¹¹⁹ *The Prelude*, IV, 1, 337.

¹²⁰ *The Excursion*, Preface, 11, 56-62.

¹²¹ Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, Vol. CLXXXII, p. 242.

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ Brownson, *Quarterly Review*, 12, 537.

are forced to ask ourselves if there is not a better way of reaching that communion than the one pointed out by the great poet. We do not question the fact that there is a profound connection between the world around us, and the world within us, but we believe a nature creed such as advanced by Wordsworth can lead but to vague and shadowy conclusions, and to a distant and bewildering view of God.

He sought, in common with other writers of his time, to lead men from the old scholastic formulae to an intuition of an immanent God, and the result is a misty notion of an all-pervading Spirit, which neither strengthens to endure, nor rouses to action. In his poetry we miss the clear sense of the Personality of God. His theories may satisfy "a herdsman on a lonely mountain top,"¹²⁴ but will they convince men living in the midst of great groaning cities? Deplore the fact as we may, men do so live, and they are the very ones whom spiritual starvation threatens most. Are they to be debarred from attaining moral and religious excellence because their surroundings afford no food for the imagination?

Wordsworth held that through communion with Nature he regained his moral poise after the shock of the French Revolution,¹²⁵ a crisis in his life which has been compared to the "dark night of the soul" experienced by religious mystics. It may well be that the sight of nature in her calmness and beauty soothed the imagination of Wordsworth: the question is, had the "grisly drama" been enacted not in imagination, but in real life, had Wordsworth been an actor and not a spectator in that drama, would the power he ascribed to nature have been sufficient to support the strain. Had he been, not afar off, but in the midst of that carnival of fever and passion, would the considerations he advances have cooled that fever and held in check those passions? We doubt it. There are moral evils of too deep and obstinate a character to yield to the remedy he proposes. The perplexed, the darkened, the diseased mind craves something more than the beauteous aspects of nature, draw deeply as it may from her store. It needs the sight of the dying Savior, and the sense of His abiding Presence.

¹²⁴ *The Excursion*, Bk. I, 1, 219.

¹²⁵ Cf. *The Prelude*, XII. Raleigh, *Life of Wordsworth*, London, 1903, p. 4, 5.

CHAPTER V

ROSSETTI: GOD SOUGHT THROUGH BEAUTY

The supremacy of science, and the advance of democracy, are usually considered the two dominant forces in modern English life and thought. The ideas which had begun to shape themselves early in the century, were clearly defined by 1830. The new political and social movements developed rapidly, but by the middle of the century, they were compelled to recede before the storm of historical criticism and scientific exposition which their wide-spread inception and propagation had aroused.¹²⁶

Prominent among the minds of more distinctly spiritual grain, whom this endless pursuit of scientific and political ideals had repelled, stands Dante Gabriel Rossetti.¹²⁷ As Keats in the earlier part of the century held aloof from the revolutionary struggles which so powerfully affected Byron and Shelley, so now Rossetti, and with him that small band of enthusiasts to be known later as the Pre-Raphaelites, cared not a whit for the endless discussion of the correlation of physical forces, natural selection, the infallibility of the Bible, and wholly unaffected by the expansion of these scientific and philosophical ideas, sought to "get away from this vain disquiet to quiet, from futile argument to fruitful meditation, from materialism to the spiritual, from this ugly world to a beautiful one, from theological squabbles to religious symbols, from fighting sects to the invisible Church, from Science and its quarrels to the great creations of imagination, from convention to truth in Art, from imitation of dead forms of Art to Nature herself. . . . Let us seek the realm of pure faith, or if we do not care to believe, to that pure image of beauty which we see once more rising from the Sea of Time."¹²⁸

Mr. Arthur Benson, in his *Life of Rossetti* points out two predominating strains in nineteenth century poetry: one, the strong impulse to find a poetical solution for the problem lying behind nature and life; the other, an attempt to treat of human relations

¹²⁶ Cf. Saintsbury, George, *The Later Nineteenth Century*, London, 1907, pp. 352-396.

¹²⁷ Cf. Rossetti, William, in *Preface to Works of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, London, 1890, p. XXI.

¹²⁸ Brooke, Stopford A., *Four Victorian Poets: Clough, Arnold, Rossetti, Morris*, London, 1908, p. 15.

in their most direct form. With neither of these had Rossetti any close affinity. He belonged rather to the medieval school of Italian poetry, and sought inspiration in the romance and mysticism of that period.¹²⁹ "He was a Latin, and he made it his special task to interpret to modern Protestant England whatever struck him as most spiritually intense and characteristic in the Latin Catholic Middle Age."¹³⁰

This was not strange. His mother was half-Italian: his father was a native of the kingdom of Naples, and a well known commentator and exponent of Dante. From his childhood he had been trained to love the great poet, and had been given his name at the baptismal font.¹³¹ In the beautiful sonnet, "Dantis Tenebrae," written in memory of his father, he says,

"And didst thou know, indeed, when at the font,
Together with thy name thou gav'st me his,
That also on thy son must Beatrice
Decline her eyes according to her wont,
Accepting me to be of those that haunt
The vale of magical dark mysteries,
Where to the hills her poet's foot-track lies,
And wisdom's living fountain to his chaunt
Trembles in music."¹³²

The poet believed that he had found in the *Vita Nuova* a sympathetic statement of his own moods, and he tells us,

"I, long bound within the threefold charm
Of Dante's love sublimed to heavenly mood,
Had marvelled; touching his Beatitude,
How grew such presence from man's shameful scorn.
At length within this book I found portrayed
Newborn that Paradisal Love of his,
And simple like a child; with whose clear aid
I understood. To such a child as this,
Christ, charging well his chosen ones, forbade
Offence: "for lo! of such my kingdom is."¹³³

That for him Beatrice declined her eyes according to her wont, his poetry affords sufficient proof. His earlier productions show

¹²⁹ Cf. *Op. cit.*, p. 78-79.

¹³⁰ Beers, *A History of English Romanticism in the Nineteenth Century*, New York, 1899, p. 298.

¹³¹ Cf. Rossetti, William M., in *Preface to Poetical Works of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, London, 1905, pp. 7, 8.

¹³² Rossetti, Dante Gabriel, *Complete Poetical Works*, Boston, 1903, p. 291.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 290.

a curious blending of human devotion and religious mysticism. The "Blessed Damosel" is of this type. It is a story of the interpenetration of time and eternity, of earthly and heavenly love. A soul, to whom it seemed

". . . she scarce had been a day
One of God's choristers;
The wonder was not yet quite gone
From that still look of hers,
Albeit, to them she left, her day
Had counted as ten years,"¹³⁴

leans over the parapet of heaven to catch a glimpse of her earthly lover. Rossetti paints the radiant vision in firm, clear outline, with a definiteness of imagery singularly striking in a theme so profoundly mystical. The golden bar, the maiden with stars in her hair and lilies in her hand, are drawn with the calm unhesitating realism of a medieval painter. She speaks of what life will be in heaven when they are reunited, and these human touches in the midst of eternity create a feeling of nearness and vastness which give to the poem an incredible charm. There is a gentle faith in the far-off meeting, yet the soul on earth is troubled, for

"shall God lift
To endless unity
The soul whose likeness with thy soul
Was but its love for thee?"¹³⁵

To those who would object that the blessed soul is pictured as too much absorbed in earthly love, we can but reply in the words of a critic, whose ability to read the mind of the poet beneath the printed page, was a source of keen satisfaction to Rossetti himself:¹³⁶ "The heaven of theology is an assemblage of paradoxes which faith alone can knit together; and in its entirety, wholly without the realm of art. In this poem we have one aspect of the life of the blessed presented to us most vividly in the only colors an artist's pencil can command—those of earthly love."¹³⁷

That Rossetti believed love begun on earth would be perfected in heaven, we gather from "The Portrait:"

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 1, 2.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹³⁶ Rossetti, William, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti, as Designer and Writer*, London, 1899, p. 154.

¹³⁷ Earle, J. C., *Catholic World*, XIV, 266, Art. "Dante Gabriel Rossetti."

"Even so, where Heaven holds breath and hears,
 The beating heart of Love's own breast,—
 Where round the secret of all spheres
 All angels lay their wings to rest,—
 How shall my soul stand rapt and awed,
 When, by the new birth borne abroad
 Throughout the music of the suns,
 It enters in her soul at once
 And knows the silence there for God.

Here with her face doth memory sit
 Meanwhile, and wait the day's decline,
 Till other eyes shall look from it,
 Eyes of the spirit's Palestine,
 Even than the old gaze tenderer:
 While hopes and aims long lost with her
 Stand round her image side by side,
 Like tombs of pilgrims that have died
 About the Holy Sepulchre."¹³⁸

He made no pretense of being either a moral teacher, or an inspirer of noble deeds: his mission was to proclaim the supremacy of beauty and love. He sought to express the intricate and complex development of human passion, its outward manifestation in beauty of form and feature, whose material loveliness he believed to be the voice of some spirit speaking to his soul. In the power of this spirit he believed with fervent faith, but he made no attempt to square that faith with the grave problems of life and conduct which have confronted men in all ages. In some of his poems, it is true, he does paint the degradation and breakage which result from preferring low loves to high ones, and shows that he has the power to look beyond appearances to the great unity of purpose that underlies all things; to see beneath the tragedy of thwarted human endeavor, the workings of a law of retributive justice. Such a poem is "Jenny," wherein he contrasts the outcast at his feet, with his cousin, just such a girl,

"And fond of dress, and change, and praise,
 So mere a woman in her ways,"¹³⁹

yet guarded in the atmosphere of home, and reflects,

¹³⁸ Rossetti, Dante Gabriel, *Complete Poems*, ed. cit., "The House of Life," p. 132.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

"So pure—so fallen! how dare to think
 Of the first common, kindred link?
 Yet, Jenny, till the world shall burn
 It seems that all things take their turn,
 And who shall say but this fair tree
 May need, in changes that may be
 Your children's children's charity?
 Scorned then, no doubt, as you are scorn'd!
 Shall no man hold his pride forewarn'd
 Till in the end, the Day of Days,
 At Judgment, one of his own race,
 As frail and lost as you, shall rise—
 His daughter, with his mother's eyes?"¹⁴⁰

Since medieval times were above all else Catholic times, it was quite impossible that an artist intensely alive to the beauty of those ages of faith, and seeking to imitate the spiritual tone of their art, would fail to be influenced by their strong religious feeling, and by their child-like devotion to the Mother of God. Rossetti's first painting, for he was painter as well as poet, had for subject the "Girlhood of the Virgin Mary,"¹⁴¹ and his second, the "Annunciation." In his poem "Ave" he has shown a tenderly sensitive comprehension of the mysteries of our Lady's life.

"Mother of fair delight,
 Thou handmaid perfect in God's sight,
 Now sitting fourth beside the Three,
 Thyself a woman Trinity.

Ah! knew'st thou of the end, when first
 That Babe was on thy bosom nursed?
 Or when he tottered round thy knee,
 Did thy great sorrow dawn on thee?

Nay, but I think the whisper crept
 Like growth through childhood,
 Work and play,
 Things common to the course of day
 Awed thee with meanings unfulfilled
 And all through girlhood, something still'd
 Thy senses like the birth of light,
 When thou hast trimmed thy lamp at night.

O Mary Mother! be not loth
 To listen—thou whom the stars clothe.

Into our shadow bend thy face,
 Bowing thee from the secret place,
 O Mary Virgin, full of grace!"¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

¹⁴¹ Rossetti, William Michael, *Op. cit.*, pp. 8-10.

¹⁴² Rossetti, Dante Gabriel, *Complete Poems*, ed. cit., p. 41, ff.

Another poem that illustrates how near Rossetti was to the mysticism of the Catholic Church in sympathy and imagination, though remote from it in conviction and practice, is the sonnet entitled "Mary Magdalene." This was written for one of his own pictures, and is best understood in the light of that picture. The beautiful Syrian girl, who makes her way, rose-crowned and laughing, in the midst of a gay procession, has been attracted by the glance of the Savior, as he sits in the house of Simon. Unmindful of the scorning faces around her, she breaks away from her persuasive lover, won by the look of sorrow and yearning in Christ's eyes:

"Oh! loose me! See'st thou not my Bridegroom's face,
That draws me to Him! for His feet my kiss,
My hair, my tears He craves today:—and oh
What words can tell what other day and place
Shall see me clasp those blood-stained feet of His."¹⁴³

"World's Worth" which was first published in *The Germ* under the title "Father Hilary" has been styled, "a delicate and subtle study of religious passion, full of special grace and spiritual charm."¹⁴⁴ The poem pictures a monk, with brain grown void and thin through excessive introspection, who, to free himself from his burden, seeks contact with the outer world, only to find new pain. At last,

"He stood within the mystery,
Girding God's blessed Eucharist:
The organ and the chant had ceased.
The last words paused against his ear
Said from the Altar: drawn round him
The gathering rest was dumb and dim.
And now the sacring-bell rang clear
And ceased; and all was awe,—the breath
Of God in man that warranteth
The inmost utmost things of faith.
He said: "O God, my world in Thee!"¹⁴⁵

That mysticism has often run riot in magic, history attests, and side by side with what we must admit to be a well-defined mystical cast of mind in Rossetti, is a curious turn for superstition, for weird, uncommon forms, for apparitions and ghostly figures, charms and mysteries.¹⁴⁶ Sister Helen, melting the waxen image

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 283.

¹⁴⁴ Swinburne, A. C., *Essays and Studies*, London, 1875, pp. 85-90.

¹⁴⁵ Rossetti, Dante Gabriel, *Op. cit.*, p. 186.

¹⁴⁶ Rossetti, William, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti as Designer and Writer*, p. 124.

of Keith of Ewern, her guilt emphasized by the innocent prattle of her little brother; "Rose Mary," with its tale of evil spirits having power over none save the sin-stained; the wild story of Adam and Lilith, give proof of how well fitted he was to show himself a master in this unreal world.

With the wider movements of life, Rossetti was little in touch: a single purpose, a sole idea, enthralled and absorbed him. The ultimate realities of life for him lay neither in intellectual striving nor in moral action, but in that beauty which Goethe¹⁴⁷ held to be a primeval phenomenon, never visible itself but seen in a thousand various expressions of the creative mind, and which Plato¹⁴⁸ discerned as a reflection of heavenly beauty, which he who looks on, worships as divine. To Rossetti, this beauty was not one form through which the soul expresses itself—it was identical with the soul, and its clearest manifestation was in a woman's face:

"This is that Lady Beauty, in whose praise
Thy voice and hand shake still,—long known to thee
By flying hair and fluttering hem, the beat
Following her daily, of thy heart and feet,
How passionately and irresistibly!
In what fond flight, how many ways and days."¹⁴⁹

It was in the light of this beauty that he interpreted all his experiences. The result is, that his poetry displays a strange fusion of the sensuous and the spiritual.

Theodore Watts says of him, "To eliminate asceticism from romantic art, and yet to remain romantic; to retain that mysticism which alone can give life to romantic art, and yet to be as sensuous as the Titians who revived sensuousness at the sacrifice of mysticism, was the quest, more or less conscious, of Rossetti's genius."¹⁵⁰ Precisely because of this attempt to cast aside the claims of renunciation and sacrifice, we find in Rossetti's poetry something of that dull gray sense of loss, which he has pictured so well in "Proserpine," when the soul realizes that she has tasted too freely of lower joys, and the sense of bondage that comes when she discovers she had chosen to rule on earth, rather than to serve in heaven.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. Eckermann, J. P., *Gespräche mit Goethe*, Leipzig, 1902, Band II, p. 300.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. Plato, *Phaedrus*, 247. *The Banquet*, 210, 211, 212.

¹⁴⁹ Rossetti, Dante Gabriel, *Op. cit.*, "The House of Life," p. 195.

¹⁵⁰ Watts-Dunton, Theodore, *Nineteenth Century*, 13, 405, Art. "The Truth About Rossetti."

"Afar away the light that brings cold cheer
Unto this wall, one instant and no more,
Admitted at my distant palace-door.
Afar the flowers of Enna from this drear
Dire fruit, which, tasted once, must thrall me here.
Afar those skies from this Tartarean gray
That chills me: and afar, how far away,
The nights that shall be from the days that were."¹⁵¹

Greatly as Rossetti was influenced, in the treatment and coloring of his subjects, by the Italian Middle Ages, yet he caught but one phase of their spirit. It is true, the whole original literature of that time was a spontaneous creation of love, but there was another kind of love than that which gave a theme to Cavalcanti and to Guinicelli. There was the love of which St. Francis of Assisi¹⁵² and Jacopone da Todi¹⁵³ sang—a heavenly love seeking out alike the unconsidered girl, and the eager leader of affairs, and ravishing them with His beauty. That an English poet of the nineteenth century, whose attraction for Catholicism lay rather in its ritual than in its creed, and whose sympathy was rather with the physical beauty of Christianity than with its moral code, should fail to perceive this, is not strange; but in that he did so fail, we hold his mysticism an exotic, and theirs a true growth.

¹⁵¹ Rossetti, Dante Gabriel, *Op. cit.*, "Sonnets," p. 281.

¹⁵² Cf. Ozanam, Frederick, *The Franciscan Poets in Italy of the Thirteenth Century*, translated by A. E. Nellen and N. C. Craig, New York, 1915, p. 49 ff.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 186, ff.

CHAPTER VI

PATMORE: GOD SOUGHT THROUGH HUMAN LOVE

Wordsworth had sought the Ultimate Reality through nature, and Rossetti through beauty: Patmore believed that in the highest and strongest of human affections he had found, not only the type, but the means, whereby the soul might meet with God.¹⁵⁴ He thought he had discovered in the relation of wedded lovers the truest analogy of the relation between God and the soul, between Humanity and Divinity. God he conceived of as the great masculine, positive force: the soul as the feminine, or receptive force, and the meeting of these two in mystic rapture as the source of all life and all joy.¹⁵⁵ Divinity can be revealed only by submitting to limitations, and hence it is through human affections that we come to realize the possibility of contact between the finite and the Infinite.¹⁵⁶ He held that "the phenomena of the human relationships of love are such because they are the realities of the Divine."¹⁵⁷

This idea had attracted him even before his conversion to the Catholic faith, and later, he believed he had found confirmation of it in the writings of the great Catholic mystics, St. Bernard, St. John of the Cross, and St. Teresa.¹⁵⁸ His first work of any moment was "The Angel in the House" wherein he essayed to be the poet of wedded life. He tells us,

"Not careless of the gift of song,
Nor out of love with noble fame,
I, meditating much and long
What I should sing, how win a name,
Considering well what theme unsung,
What reason worth the cost of rhyme,
Remains to loose the poet's tongue
In these last days, the dregs of time,
Learn that to me, though born so late,
There does, beyond desert, befall
(May my great fortune make me great!)
The first of themes sung last of all."¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁴ Cf. Patmore, *Autobiography* given in Champney, *Memoirs and Correspondence of Coventry Patmore*, London, 1900, Vol. II, pp. 45-47.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. Patmore, *Religio Poetae*, London, 1905, p. 162, ff.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*, *Rod, Root and Flower*, London, 1905, p. 102.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, *Religio Poetae*, p. 174.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 50-58.

¹⁵⁹ Patmore, *Poems*, London, 1906, "The Angel in the House," Prologue, p. 4.

In this poem Patmore holds forth a pure and gracious type of womanhood as a call on man's respect, and evinces a knowledge of the excellences of a true woman's mind. He shows a subtle insight into her moods and sentiments, and though the characters are sketched, rather than delineated, yet they are living personalities, not vivified statues. It is in the "Preludes," however, that the true theme and temper of the poem is struck. These, with the "Epilogues" give an analysis of the psychology of love with a precision of insight and ecstasy of feeling all the more untrammelled because the poet believed the bewildering happiness of which he sang to be not unlike the love of the blessed in heaven. It is meant to be "a purely aesthetic observation of a certain phase of life, conceived in the intoxicating light of imagination. It is Patmore's great claim upon our respect that he has understood its dignity, and recorded it so delicately."¹⁰⁰

He was, by nature, a mystic, and he felt himself drawn more and more irresistibly towards the transcendent and the supernatural. Here and there throughout this poem there are intimations that, worthy of his best gifts as he considered his subject, a loftier Muse than that of the family circle was gaining power over him. In "Perfect Love Rare" he complains,

"Most rare is still most noble found,
Most noble still most incomplete;
Sad law, which leaves King Love uncrown'd
In this obscure, terrestrial seat!"¹⁰¹

and in "Love Justified" we find,

"After awhile
This pool of private charity
Shall make its continent an isle
And roll, a world embracing sea.

This little germ of nuptial love
Which springs so simply from the sod,
The root is, as my song shall prove,
Of all our love to man and God."¹⁰²

"Love's Immortality" contains a yet clearer expression of this tendency:

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Gosse, Edmund, *Coventry Patmore*, London, 1905, p. 100.

¹⁰¹ Patmore, *Poems*, ed. cit., p. 36.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 37.

"My faith is fast
That all the loveliness I sing
Is made to bear the mortal blast,
And blossom in a better spring."¹⁶³

In "Orpheus" he would

"with heart-persuading might,
Pursue the Poet's sacred task
Of superseding faith by sight.

To prouder folly let me show
Earth by divine light made divine,
And let the saints, who hear my word,
Say, 'Lo, the clouds begin to shine
About the coming of the Lord.'"¹⁶⁴

"Faithful Forever" and "The Victories of Love" record this transition period. Both of them picture a noble devotion with no satisfying completion; an intense human feeling which seeks to realize itself in a kind of ecstasy, restless under the limitations of nature and the perplexing problems of mortal destiny, and subdued and softened by sorrow. Earthly love still remains in the soul, but as a heavenly presence rather than an earthly influence, inspiring a high sense of duty, and awakening the hope of some glorious sequel to this unfinished love, in which "the human reality shall not be wholly superseded by the celestial ideal, but in which a secondary service to the bright original form of tangible beauty, in some new angelic phase of being, shall be reconcilable with a self-surrender to the claims of Divine Life, and the duties of universal love."¹⁶⁵

"For all delights of earthly love
Are shadows of the heavens, and move
As other shadows do: they flee
From him that follows them: and he
Who flies, forever finds his feet
Embraced by their pursuings sweet."¹⁶⁶

It is not, however, in these earlier poems that Patmore displays his powers at their best. In the "Unknown Eros," especially in the "Psyche" odes, his genius reached its culminating point. In *Rod, Root, and Flower*, he says: "There comes a time in the life

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

¹⁶⁵ "Faithful Forever," Review in *Living Age*, 67, 764.

¹⁶⁶ Patmore, *Poems*, ed. cit., p. 255.

of every one who follows the Truth with full sincerity when God reveals to the sensitive Soul the fact that He alone can satisfy those longings, the satisfaction of which she has hitherto been tempted to seek elsewhere. Then follows a series of experiences which constitute the "sure mercies of David."¹⁶⁷ Of these "experiences" the poet has told us nothing. With one bound, he passes alike the "via purgetiva" and "via illuminativa," to breathe the rarefied air of "via unitiva," and to utter forth "that formless, unintelligible blaze of mystic doctrine into human words of honied peace and beauty"¹⁶⁸ through a series of "Odes" which for poignancy of emotion and exaltation of thought are scarcely equalled in the English language. They are meant to deal with that "region of religion which is inexpressible in human language to the human heart,"¹⁶⁹ and admit of appreciation only so far as the spiritual life is a comprehended reality. Patmore felt that they would be a "language dead"¹⁷⁰ to many: he calls them

"chants as of a lonely thrush's throat
At latest eve,
That does in each calm note
Both joy and grieve;
Notes few and strong and fine
Gilt with sweet days decline,
And sad with promise of a different sun."¹⁷¹

It was his theory that a poet might say truths which it is not expedient for others to utter, and diffuse their warmth and light, while allowing their scorching brilliance to remain invisible:¹⁷² this he attempted to do for the mystics, whose teachings he thought too little known.¹⁷³

"Eros and Psyche" begins with the plaintive cry of the soul:

"Love, I heard tell of thee so oft!"¹⁷⁴

Thrice, in touches of human love, the soul has felt the solitary beat of sudden wings,

"Through delicatest ether feathering soft"¹⁷⁵

¹⁶⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*, *Rod, Root and Flower*, p. 57.

¹⁶⁸ Patmore, *Extracts from Letters*, Champney, *Op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 250.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 258.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, *Poems*, ed. cit., "A Dead Language," p. 359.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, "The Unknown Eros," *Poem*, p. 271.

¹⁷² Cf. *Rod, Root and Flower*, p. 33.

¹⁷³ Cf. Patmore, *Religio Poetae*, p. 7.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, *Poems*, ed. cit., p. 337.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

which have awakened in it a desire for greater intimacy and stronger love:

"Long did I muse, what service or what charm,
Might lure thee, blissful Bird, into mine arms."¹⁷⁶

All efforts at self-decoration on the part of the soul are in vain: they are not "fit strings"¹⁷⁷ with which to entice the spirit that comes only of His own will.

"At last, of endless failure much afraid,
Tonight I would do nothing but lie still
And promise, wert thou once within my window sill
Thine unknown will."¹⁷⁸

This is the wise passivity of the mystics, and the attitude of mind recommended by St. Teresa: "Let the master of the house do what he pleases; He is wise and powerful; he understands what is best for you, and best for himself also."¹⁷⁹ Quite in accord, also, with the teachings of this Saint that disinterested love is the surest means of obtaining divine favor, and that He often comes to the soul when she is least thinking of it, are the lines that follow:

"And here—and how thou mad'st me start!
Thou art!"¹⁸⁰

God seeks the soul with more ardor than she longs for Him:

"Ah, Psyche, guess'd you nought
I craved but to be caught?
Wanton, it was not you
But I that did so passionately sue:
And for your beauty, not unscathed, I fought
With Hades, ere I own'd in you a thought."¹⁸¹

The soul revels in the delights of divine Love:

"O Heavenly Lover true
Is this they mouth upon my forehead pressed,
Are these thine arms about my bosom link'd?
Are these thine hands that tremble near my heart,
Where join two hearts, for juncture more distinct?"¹⁸²

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ St. Teresa, *The Way of Perfection*, translated by Dalton, London, 1857, p. 82.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, *The Interior Castle*, translated by the Benedictines of Stanbrook, 1906, p. 76-77.

¹⁸¹ Patmore, *Poems*, ed. cit., p. 338.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

and in the light of this revelation all past experiences assume a new aspect:

"What dim, waste tracts of life shine sudden like moonbeams
On windless ocean shaken by sweet dreams."¹⁸³

The soul fears too much of human passion in this joyous abandonment of herself, and asks

"Yet how 'scape quite
Nor pluck pure pleasure with profane delight?
How know I that my Love is what he seems!"¹⁸⁴ By deeds:
"Tis this:
I make the childless to keep joyful house.

A friend, my Psyche, comes with barren bliss,
A God's embraces never are in vain."¹⁸⁵

Here again there is a harking back to the older mystics. The soul whom God has chosen for his special dwelling place, must needs forget herself: all her thoughts are bent on how to please Him better, and when and how she can show her love for Him. St. Teresa says, "This is the aim and end of prayer, this is the reason for the spiritual marriage, whose children are always good works,"¹⁸⁶ and St. John of the Cross,

"In search of my Love
I will traverse mountains and strands:
I will gather no flowers,
I will fear no wild beasts:
And I will overpass the mighty and the frontiers."¹⁸⁷

The labors and sufferings from which she has hitherto held back as beyond her strength, are eagerly embraced:

"'Tis easier grown
Thine arduous rule to don
Than for a Bride to put her bride-dress on!
Nay, rather, now
'Tis no more service to be borne serene,
Whither thou wilt, thy stormful wings between."¹⁸⁸

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁶ *Interior Castle*, ed. cit., p. 284.

¹⁸⁷ *A Spiritual Canticle*, Writings of St. John of the Cross, translated by Lewis, London, 1911, Vol. II, p. 4.

¹⁸⁸ Patmore, *Poems*, ed. cit., p. 339.

The soul fears to find an imperfection in her burning love for Him:

"But, oh!
Can I endure
This flame, yet live for what thou lov'st me pure?"¹⁸⁹

and the Christ Lover, in tender humanness replies:

"Himself the God let blame,
If all about him bursts to quenchless flame!
My Darling, know
Your spotless fairness is not matched in snow,
But in the integrity of fire.
What'er you are, Sweet, I require.
A sorry God were he
That fewer claim'd than all Love's mighty kingdoms three."¹⁹⁰

He is not satisfied with the mere homage of mind and will, the affections must play some part in His worship. As the soul marvels

"What thing is this?
A God to make me, nothing, needful to his bliss,
And humbly wait my favor for a kiss!"

she is reminded, that should a great King,

"Sue from her hedge a little Gipsy Maid,
For far off royalty bewray'd
By some wild beauties, to herself unknown,"¹⁹¹

and by

"Some power by all but him unguessed
Of growing king-like were she king caressed,"¹⁹²

on the sole condition that she should feel

"Her nothingness her giddiest boast,
As being the charm for which he loved her most,"¹⁹³

he would be justly wroth with her should she desist, and think herself too base a reed

"to trill so blest a tone!"¹⁹⁴

In the lines which follow, the soul is represented as reaching the heights of ecstasy:

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 340.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

"O too much joy; O touch of airy fire;
O turmoil of content; O unperturbed desire,"¹⁹⁵

and she, like St. Catherine of Sienna, who asked for "yet more sufferings, O Lord, yet more"¹⁹⁶ cries out,

"Bitter be thy behests!
Lie like a bunch of myrrh between my aching breasts.
Some greatly pangful penance would I brave
Sharpness me save
From being slain by sweet!"¹⁹⁷

The divine Lover bids her not seek for sufferings save as they come:

"Custom's joy-killing breath
Shall bid you sigh full soon for custom killing death."¹⁹⁸

The soul is ready to obey, yet she must make her protestation of fidelity,

"In all I thee obey! and thus I know
That all is well."¹⁹⁹

In St. Teresa we read, "Do you know what it is to be truly spiritual? It is for men to be the slaves of God,—branded with His mark, which is the cross,"²⁰⁰ and here the soul exclaims in a fever of impassioned zeal,

"Thy love has conquered me: do with me as thou wilt,
And use me as a chattel that is thine!
Kiss, tread me under foot, cherish or beat,
Sheathe in my heart sharp pain up to the hilt,
Invent what else were most perversely sweet;
Nay, let the Fiend drag me through dens of guilt;
Let Earth, Heav'n, Hell
'Gainst my content combine;
What could make nought the touch that made thee mine!"²⁰¹

But when the vision would depart, her courage ebbs:

"Ah, say not yet, farewell!"²⁰²

and the answer is a playful taunt:

"Behold, Beloved, the penance you would brave."²⁰³

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ Cf. *Dialogues of St. Catherine of Sienna*, translated by Thorold, London, 1913.

¹⁹⁷ Patmore, *Poems*, p. 340.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁰ *The Interior Castle*, *Op. cit.*, p. 285.

²⁰¹ Patmore, *Poems*, ed. cit., p. 342.

²⁰² *Ibid.*

²⁰³ *Ibid.*

In touching humility, the soul acknowledges her weakness:

"Cursed when it comes, the bitter thing we crave!
Thou leav'st me now, like to the moon at dawn,
A little vacuous world alone in air.
I will not care.
When dark comes back my dark shall be withdrawn!

Go as thou wilt and come! Lover divine,
Thou still art jealously and wholly mine.

Rainbow, thou hast my heaven sudden spanned
I am the apple of thy glorious gaze,
Each else life cent'ring to a different blaze."²⁰⁴

and to prove that the vision is a true one, fructifying in action, she adds:

"Whilst thou art gone, I'll search the weary meads,
To deck my bed with lilies of fair deeds!"²⁰⁵

Then follows a delicately, coyly candid invitation to the Bridegroom to visit her again:

"And if thou choose to come this eventide,
A touch, my Love, will set my casement wide."²⁰⁶

In the second of the "Psyche" odes, "De Natura Deorum," we have the relation between God and the soul expressed in imagery that is essentially human, and daintily subtle. Psyche, troubled at the dread God who has won her heart, conscious that she is foolish, weak, and small, and fearful lest He visit her no more, seeks the "Wise Mother," who comforts her:

"Know

Sweet little daughter sad,
He did but feign to go;
And never more
Shall cross thy window sill,
Or pass beyond thy door,
Save by thy will.
He is present now in some dim place apart
Of the ivory house wherewith thou mad'st him glad."²⁰⁷

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 344.

This is in harmony with the teaching of the Catholic mystics that a soul once raised to the heights of contemplation, rarely loses that grace.²⁰⁸ The soul laments her unworthiness:

"Sadness and change and pain
Shall me forever stain;
For, though my blissful fate
Be for a billion years,
How shall I stop my tears
That life was once so low and Love arrived so late."²⁰⁹

St. John of the Cross tells us, that when "the interior favor of the king's scepter"²¹⁰ is extended to the soul, it becomes so bold in its intense and loving exaltation, that no prudence can withhold it, no counsel content it, no shame restrain it; for the favor which God hath shown it has made it vehemently bold.²¹¹ In "Psyche's Discontent" we read,

"Leave me awhile that I may shew thee clear
How Goddess-like thy love has lifted me;
How seeming lone upon the gaunt, lone shore,
I'll trust thee near,
When thou'rt to knowledge of my heart, no more
Than a dream's heed
Of lost joy track'd in scent of the sea-weed!
Leave me to pluck the incomparable flower
Of frailty lion-like fighting in thy name and power;
To make thee laugh in thy safe heaven, to see
With what grip fell
I'll cling to hope when life draws hard to hell.
Yea, cleave to thee, when me thou seem'st to slay,
Haply, at close of some most cruel day,
To find myself in thy reveal'd arms clasped,
Just when I say,
My feet have slipp'd at last!"²¹²

The soul has grown so strong that delight is to her a "fond indignity"²¹³ and she merits the reproach of her Lord:

"Little bold Femininity,
That darest blame Heaven, what would'st thou have or be?"²¹⁴

²⁰⁸ Cf. St. Teresa, *The Interior Castle*, p. 259. St. John of the Cross, *The Obscure Night of the Soul*, ed. cit., p. 448.

²⁰⁹ Patmore, *Poems*, ed. cit., p. 344.

²¹⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 438.

²¹¹ Cf. Patmore, *Poems*, pp. 438-439.

²¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 349-350.

²¹³ *Ibid.*

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 350.

Her response is a pæon of humility and ardor:

"Shall I, the gnat which dances in the ray,
Dare to be reverent? Therefore, dare I say
I cannot guess the good that I desire;
But this I know, I spurn the gifts which Hell
Can mock till which is which 'tis hard to tell.
I love Thee, God; yea, and 'twas such assault
As this which made me thine; if that be fault;
But I, thy Mistress, merit should thine ire,
If aught so little, transitory and low
As this which made me thine
Should hold me so."

The Master is satisfied:

"Little to thee, my Psyche, is this, but much to me."

"Accept the sweet, and say 'tis sacrifice!
Sleep, Center to the tempest of my love,
And dream thereof,
And keep the smile which sleeps within thy face
Like sunny eve in some forgotten place."²¹⁵

Mr. Edmund Gosse, in his *Life of Coventry Patmore* remarks:
"The typical mystic has no pity for his wretched body. It is in a cloud of fatigue and anguish, in voluntary tribulation inflicted without mercy, that the saints of this type obtained their visions. . . . For this kind of penitential hysteria Patmore had the greatest possible disdain."²¹⁶ Passing over the fact that among the mystics whose teachings are held in greatest esteem by the Church, we find no authority for depreciation of the body, but only for repression of unlawful claims, there is in Patmore's work, sufficient proof that he was in full accord with the orthodox Catholic doctrine of asceticism. In "Eros and Psyche," the soul, urged by her great love is made to say:

"Shouldst thou me tell
Out of thy warm caress to go
And roll my body in the biting snow,
My very body's joy were but increased;
More pleasant 'tis to please than to be pleased."²¹⁷

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 350-351.

²¹⁶ Gosse, Edmund, *Op. cit.*, p. 165.

²¹⁷ Patmore, *Poems*, ed. cit., p. 341.

Psyche, in "De Natura Deorum," calls her self-inflicted wounds the effect of

"Happiness at play,
And speech of tenderness no speech can say."²¹⁸

and complains

"He loves me dearly, but he shakes a whip
Of deathless scorpions at my slightest slip."

She asks, in "Psyche's Discontent,"

"To bear, apart from thy delight and thee,
The fardel coarse of customary life's
Exceeding injucundity."²¹⁹

In "Victory and Defeat" the poet says,

"Ah, God, alas,
How soon it came to pass
The sweetness melted from thy barbed hook
Which I so simply took;
And I lay bleeding on the bitter land,
Afraid to stir against thy least command.

Thereafter didst thou smite
So hard that, for a space,
Uplifted seem'd Heav'n's everlasting door,
And I the darling of thy grace."²²⁰

Patmore was an aristocrat, and abhorred the crowd in religion as in politics.²²¹ He sought the high planes of the spiritual life, and this temper of mind explains, perhaps, his attraction for St. John of the Cross, of whom it has been said that he acted towards the Lord like a Spanish grandee in the presence of his king.²²²

The only kind of well-being with which Patmore was much concerned was that which led to spiritual and moral growth, in the effecting of which pain has always been considered a necessary element. The full force and meaning of the ode in which he sings the praises of "Pain" are too obvious to permit of misinterpretation:

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 346.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 349.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 307-308.

²²¹ Cf. *Ibid.*, "1867" and "1880-85," pp. 291, ff. and 299, ff.

²²² Cf. Joly, Henri, *Psychologie des Saints*, Paris, 1895, p. 78.

"O Pain, Love's mystery,
 Close next of kin
 To joy and heart's delight,
 Low Pleasure's opposite,
 Choice food of sanctity
 And medicine of sin,
 Angel, whom even they that will pursue
 Pleasure with hell's whole gust
 Find that they must
 Perversely woo,
 My lips, thy live coal touching, speak thee true."²²³

When his poetic powers were in their maturity, Patmore conceived a desire to dedicate his gifts to the Mother of God; to bring back to her the golden coin she had given him.²²⁴ In "*Deliciae Sapientiae de Amore*" he had sung

"Love, light for me
 Thy ruddiest blazing torch,
 That I, albeit a beggar by the Porch
 Of the glad Palace of Virginity,
 May gaze within, and sing the pomp I see."²²⁵

and in one of his letters we find, "Perfect humanity, verging upon, but never entering the breathless region of Divinity, is the real subject of all true love-poetry; but in all love-poetry hitherto an 'ideal' and not a reality has been the subject, more or less."²²⁶ In the Blessed Virgin he thought to find such a reality. The poem planned was destined never to be completed, but "*The Child's Purchase*" which the poet meant to be the "Prologue" to his great work, abounds in delicacy of feeling, and sincerity of expression. Among the many lines of exceeding beauty it contains are these:

"Mother, thou lead'st me still by unknown ways,
 Giving the gifts I know not how to ask,
 Bless thou the work
 Which, done, redeems my many wasted days,
 Makes white the murk,
 And crowns the few which thou wilt not dispraise."²²⁷

It is interesting to note the attitude of Patmore toward the other poets whose works are here considered. For Wordsworth he

²²³ Patmore, *Poems*, ed. cit., p. 351.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, quoted in Champney, *Op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 89.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 330.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, quoted in Champney, *Op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 255.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, *Poems*, ed. cit., pp. 358-359.

had a profound respect.²²⁸ There is something very similar in the manner in which these two poets viewed, in the retrospect, the experiences of their childhood. In his *Autobiography* Patmore tells us: "Angels spoke to me from time to time, as they do to all, and I frequently saw, as others do in youth, the things of earth lighted up with the light which was not of earth; and I was endowed with what, from my subsequent experience of men, I am obliged to conclude was an unusual faculty for implicitly believing my own eyes, without regard to the present defect of visible continuity between their reports and the facts of the material and external life. The things I saw, in those rare moments, when the properly human eye was open, remained with me, as abiding marks, and were the jewels of my life."²²⁹ In "Auras of Delight" there are lines that recall "Intimations of Immortality."

"And Him I thank, who can make live again,
The dust, but not the joy we once profane,
That I, of ye,
Beautiful habitations, auras of delight,
In childish years and since had sometimes sense and sight,

But did for me they altogether die,
Those trackless glories glimps'd in upper sky?
Were they of chance, or vain,
Nor good at all again
For curb of heart or fret?
Nay, though, by grace,
Lest haply, I refuse God to his face,
Their likeness wholly I forget,
Ah, yet,
Often in straits which else for me were ill,
I mind me still
I *did* respire the lonely auras sweet,
I *did* the blest abodes behold."²³⁰

His relations with Rossetti, in the early days of the Pre-Raphaelite movement, bordered on friendship, but he seems to have thought the latter not true to his high trust. He had failed to develop the idealism which his earlier work had foreshadowed, and Patmore came to regard him as one who, "more than any other man since the great old artist age, had been dowered with insight into spiritual mysteries, that the Ark of passion had been delivered into his

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, quoted in Champney, *Op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 100-101.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, *Autobiography*, Champney, *Op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 45.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, *Poems*, ed. cit., pp. 336-337.

hands, and that he had played with it, had used it to serve his curiosity and his vanity, had profaned the Holy of Holies."²²¹

Between Patmore and Francis Thompson, the poet whose works form the subject of the concluding chapter of this treatise, there was great sympathy. There is much similarity of thought, and even of form, in their poems. It was Patmore's wish that Thompson might be one of those singers whom "Views of the unveil'd heavens alone bring forth," and that he might utter to a generation better prepared than was the one to which Patmore sang, the immortal truths of David and of Dante.²²²

²²¹ Gosse, Edmund, *Op. cit.*, p. 207.

²²² Cf. Patmore, *Poems*, p. 353.

CHAPTER VII

FRANCIS THOMPSON: GOD SOUGHT THROUGH REVELATION

"To be the poet of the return to Nature is somewhat, but I would be the poet of the return to God."²³³ In no other poet do we find so deep an insistence on the consciousness of God in creation, as in Francis Thompson: nowhere do we find poetry so filled with that "sense of something far more deeply interfused"²³⁴ as is his. The eternal themes of Nature, Man, and God, had been trumpeted in Wordsworth, quired ethereally in Shelley, voiced wistfully in Keats, to receive new "intimations of immortality" in Thompson.²³⁵ "I look to you to crush out all this false mysticism,"²³⁶ Coventry Patmore had written to him, and he endeavored to fulfill his friend's behest by substituting for the sentimental vaporings of would-be mystics, faith: for their cleverly concealed fatalism, hope: and for their Nirvana, the heaven of orthodox Christianity.

Francis Thompson was Catholic through and through, and "his work is the concrete refutation of the idea that thought and imagination in order to be free must be unfettered. His freedom is kept within the bonds of faith and reason, simply because the passion of the poet was so completely informed by reason, and his reason so completely informed by faith. And it is precisely the bonds of faith and reason which have served to make the poet great."²³⁷ To him the vast universe is but a reflection of God's mind, of which man's unaided vision sees but an infinitesimal portion, and whose beauty is only a faint suggestion of the heavenly ideal, not a component part. Thompson loved nature with the worship of a Greek, yet his love of nature had nothing in common with the new paganism and the new pantheism of the day, except, perhaps, its intensity. In "Nature's Immortality" he says, "Absolute Nature lives not in our life, nor yet is lifeless, but lives in the life of God; and in so far, and so far merely, as man himself lives in that life, does he come into sympathy with nature, and nature with him. She is God's

²³³ Thompson, quoted in Meynell, *Life of Francis Thompson*, p. 205.

²³⁴ Wordsworth, *Lines on Tintern Abbey*.

²³⁵ Cf. Cock, "Francis Thompson," *Church Quar. Rev.*, 78, 26.

²³⁶ Meynell, *Op. cit.*, p. 198.

²³⁷ Gerrard, S. J., *Catholic World*, 86, 613, "Thompson, The Poet."

daughter, who stretches her hand only to her Father's friends. Not Shelley, not Wordsworth himself, ever drew so close to the heart of nature as did the Seraph of Assisi, who was close to the heart of God."²³⁸ This is the teaching of the true mystic.

He had little sympathy with those who would deify Nature.

"Lo, here stand I and Nature, gaze to gaze,
And I the greater. Crouch thou at my feet,
Barren of heart, and beautiful of ways,
Strong to weak purpose, fair and brute-brained beast
I am not of thy fools
Who goddess thee with impious flatterings sweet,
Stolen from the little Schools
Which cheeped when that great mouth of Rydal ceased."²³⁹

Earth, beautiful as it is, does not suffice for him; it is a symbol of eternal beauty, but the poet and mystic longs for the reality behind the symbol. But a century before Keats had sung,

"Beauty is truth, truth Beauty,—that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."²⁴⁰

but a cycle of pain and passion had intervened, and men were ready to listen to the message of Thompson:

"O Heart of Nature! did man ever hear
Thy yearned for word, supposed dear?
His pleading voice returns to him alone.
He hears none other tone.
No; No;
Take back, O Poets, your praises little wise,
Nor fool weak hearts to their unshunned distress,
Who deem, that even after your device
They shall lie down in Nature's holiness:
For it was never so;
She has no hands to bless:
Her pontiff thou; she looks to thee,
O man: she has no use, nor asks not, for thy knee."²⁴¹

With the Nature-mystics he revels in the beauty and wonder of life, but Catholicism was as a sanctuary to him from the pantheism which might otherwise have claimed him for its own. "He can draw exquisite genre pictures of the Seasons, and evoke the shy genius-loci who informs the wind, or cloud or stream. The changes

²³⁸ *Prose Works*, edited by Meynell, p. 82.

²³⁹ *On Nature, Land and Complaint*, Meynell Edition, Vol. II, p. 162.

²⁴⁰ *Ode on a Grecian Urn*.

²⁴¹ Thompson, *Op. cit.*

on the face of Nature he interprets in terms of the moods joyous or sad, willful or wistful of these unseen habitants. Yet it is because he realizes so intimately those gracious presences that he cannot rest in their finite, concrete expression of Nature."²⁴² He believes "that the intellect of man seems unable to seize the divine beauty of Nature, until moving beyond that outward beauty it gazes on the spirit of Nature: even so the mind seems unable to appreciate the beautiful face of a woman until it has learned to appreciate the more beautiful beauty of her soul."²⁴³

Nature affords no real solace in the sterner passes of life: love is personal, Nature is impersonal:

"Hope not of Nature; she nor gives nor teaches;
She suffers thee to take
But what thine own hand reaches,
And can itself make sovereign for their ache.
Ah, hope not her to heal
The ills she cannot feel
Or dry with many business hand the tear
Which never yet was weak
In her unfettered eyes, on her uncarkèd cheek."²⁴⁴

He asks, "What is the heart of Nature, if it exists at all? Is it, according to the conventional doctrine derived from Wordsworth and Shelley, a heart of love, according with the heart of man, and stealing out to him through a thousand avenues of mute sympathy? No, in this sense I repeat seriously what I said lightly: 'Nature has no heart.'"²⁴⁵

If we seek, among the mystics, for further confirmation of the belief that in Nature there is no final content for man, we shall find it in Richard Jeffries. In *The Story of My Heart* he describes his peculiar mystical experiences: "Sometimes a very ecstasy of exquisite enjoyment of the entire visible universe filled me." Yet he refuses to see a mind in Nature, and later when shattered with pain of body, and agonized in mind, he gazed upon the southern downs that had received the worship of his life, he cried, "There is nothing human in Nature: give me soul life, give me love."²⁴⁶

²⁴² Moynihan, "The Symbolism of Francis Thompson," *Cath. Univ. Bulletin*, 19, 25.

²⁴³ *A Renegade Poet and Other Essays*, p. 57.

²⁴⁴ *On Nature: Land and Plaine*.

²⁴⁵ *Nature's Immortality*.

²⁴⁶ Jeffries, *The Story of My Heart*, London, 1907, p. 199.

While Thompson was very far from reading into Nature powers it does not possess, he had a true poet's susceptibility to beauty in child, and flower, and sky, but it was the appreciation of the mystic, who with a purified spirit comes "to enjoy all creatures in God, and God in all creatures."²⁴⁷

St. John of the Cross says, "That thou mayest have pleasure in everything, seek pleasure in nothing,"²⁴⁸ and Thompson in the lines that follow sums up the mystical doctrine that only by leaving creatures can we find them fair:

"This Nature fair
This Gate is closed, this Gate beautiful,
No man shall go in there
Since the Lord God did pass through it;
'Tis sealed unto the King,
The King Himself shall sit
Therein, with them that are His following:
Go: leave thy labor null;
Ponder this thing
Lady divine!
Thou giv'st to men good wine
And yet the best thou hast
And nectarous, keepest to the last,
And bring'st not forth before the Master's sign:"

It is not Nature, but man that has gone wrong:

"For, ah, this Lady I have much miscalcd:
No fault in her, but in thy wooing is:

Then if thy wooing thou aright wouldst 'gin
Lo here the door; straight and rough shapen 'tis
And scant they be that even here make stays,
But do the lintel miss,
In dust of these blind days.

For know, this Lady Nature thou hast left,
Of whom thou fear'st thee reft
This Lady is God's daughter, and she lends
Her hand but to His friends,
But to her Father's friends the hand
Which thou wouldst win;
Then enter in
And here is that which shall for all make mends."²⁴⁹

He had sought to find content in the beautiful Nature myths which form so large a part of the "Renascence of Wonder" in later

²⁴⁷ Meister Eckhart, quoted in Waskernagel, *Altdeutsches Lesebuch*, p. 891.

²⁴⁸ *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, Bk. I, Ch. XIII.

²⁴⁹ Thompson, *On Nature: Land and Plaint*, p. 167.

English poetry, but he found them vague and unsubstantial, with no power to stay in the deeper cares and sorrows of life—her shrines were unavailing.

"Nature, poor step-dame, cannot slake my drouth;
Let her, if she would owe,
Drop down yon blue bosom veil of sky, and show me
The breasts o' her tenderness:
Never did any milk of hers once bless
My thirsting mouth."²⁵⁰

Thompson can rejoice in beauty with all the sensuous loveliness of Keats: but ever through this glad earth-cry he catches dim pealings of a "higher and a solemn voice." Nature becomes sacramental and the visible a portent and prophecy of the invisible. Perhaps no one of his poems illustrates this attitude, as Christian as it is poetic, more characteristically than the lovely Paschal ode "From the Night of Forebeing" with its inspiring,

"Look up, O mortals, and the portent heed:
In very deed,
Washed with new fire to their irradiant birth
Reintegrated are the heavens and earth!
From sky to sod
The world's unfolded blossom smells of God."²⁵¹

He weaves the name of Christ into the very texture of nature and gives phenomenal life a new meaning.²⁵² In the "Prelude" to the "Ode to the Setting Sun" he sounds a warning,

"O deceived,
If thou hear in these thoughtful harmonies,
A pious phantom of adorings reaved,
An echo of fair ancient flatteries."

He is prepared to sing,

"A song thou hast not heard in Northern day;
For Rome too daring, and for Greece too dark."

for

"Thou dost image, thou dost follow
That King-Maker of Creation,
Who ere Hellas hailed Apollo,
Gave thee, angel God, thy station:
Thou art of Him a type memorial,
Like him thou hang'st in dreadful pomp of blood
Upon thy Western rood;"²⁵³

²⁵⁰ Thompson, *The Hound of Heaven*, ed. cit., Vol. I, p. 110.

²⁵¹ Cf. Gerrard, *Op. cit.*

²⁵² Cf. Walsh, *Eccl. Rev.*, XLIX, 25.

²⁵³ Thompson, *Ode to the Setting Sun*, ed. cit., Vol. I, p. 125.

The rood is "too dark" for Hellas, and for her disciples of today,
yet

"Even so, O Cross! thine is the victory,
Thy roots are fast within our fairest fields,
Brightness they emanate in Heaven from thee,
Here thy dread symbol only shadows yields."

For consolation he appeals to the "Way's one mortal grace."²⁵⁴

"Therefore, O tender Lady, Queen Mary,
Thou gentleness that dost enmoss and drape
The Cross's rigorous austerity,
Wipe thou the blood from wounds that needs must gape,"²⁵⁵

and he hears the answer:

"Lo, though suns rise and set, but crosses stay,
'I leave thee ever,' saith she, 'light of cheer'
'Tis so; yon sky still thinks upon the Day,
And showers aerial blossoms on his bier."²⁵⁶

When he

"With wingèd feet had run,
Through all the windy earth about,
Quested its secret of the sun,
And heard what things the stars together shout,"²⁵⁷

how could it be that he would fail to find a message within these:

"By this, O singer; know we if thou see,
When men shall say to thee: Lo, Christ is here,
Believe them; yea, and this —then art thou seer,
When all thy crying clear
Is but! Lo here! lo there! ah me, lo everywhere."²⁵⁸

Thompson had learned that "to the Poet life is full of visions, to the Mystic it is one vision."²⁵⁹

Thompson's view of human beauty is quite the antithesis of that held by Rossetti. Rossetti viewed spiritual beauty in the light of the body: Thompson viewed physical beauty in the light of the soul. The key to his conception of material loveliness in woman, is given in the following lines:

²⁵⁴ Thompson, *Grace of the Way*, ed. cit., Vol. II, p. 67.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, *Ode to the Setting Sun, After-Strain*, ed. cit., Vol. I, p. 126.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, *Orient Ode*, ed. cit., Vol. II, p. 28.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁹ Cock, "Francis Thompson," *Dublin Review*, 149, 271.

"How should I gauge what beauty is her dole,
 Who cannot see her countenance for her soul,
 As birds see not the casement for the sky?
 And, as 'tis check they prove its presence by,
 I know not of her body till I find
 My flight debarred the heaven of her mind."²⁶⁰

His phantasy, free from the meshes of sense, can live only in heaven:

"How praise the woman, who but knew the spirit?
 How praise the color of her eyes uncaught
 While they were coloured with her varying thought?
 How her mouth's shape, who only use to know
 What tender shape her speech had fit it to?"

For mere bodily beauty he had no care:

"But for what we call
 Beauty—the loveliness corporeal,
 Its most just praise a thing improper were
 For singer or to listener, me or her.
 She wears that body but as one indues
 A robe, half careless, for it is the use;
 Although her soul and it so fair agree,
 We sure may unattaint of heresy,
 Concert it might the soul's begetter be:
 The immortal could we cease to contemplate,
 The mortal part suggests its every trait."²⁶¹

Thompson's affections, in their intensity, were centered on two forms of personality, God and little children. In "The Poppy," dedicated "To Monica" the poet says,

"You have loved me, Fair, three lives—or days:
 'Twill pass with the passing of my face.
 But where I go, your face goes too,
 To watch lest I play false to you.
 I am but, my sweet, your foster-lover,
 Knowing well when certain years are over
 You vanish from me to another;
 Yet, I know, and love, like the foster-mother."²⁶²

In "Sister Songs" he explains his tender regard for childhood:

²⁶⁰ Thompson, *Poems*, ed. cit., *Love in Dian's Lap*, Vol. I, p. 96.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, *Poems on Children*, p. 8.

"Once,—in that nightmare-time which still doth haunt
 My dreams, a grim, unbidden visitant—
 Forlorn, and faint, and stark,
 I had endured through watches of the dark
 The abashless inquisition of each star,

Suffered the trampling hoof of every hour
 In night's slow-wheelèd car;
 Until the tardy dawn dragged me at length
 From under those dread wheels; and, bled of strength,
 I waited the inevitable last:
 Then there came past
 A child; like thee, a spring-flower; but a flower
 Fallen from the budded coronal of spring,
 And through the city-streets blown withering,
 She passed,—O brave, sad, loveliest, tender thing!
 And of her own scant pittance did she give,
 That I might eat and live:
 Then fled, a swift and trackless fugitive.
 Therefore I kissed in thee
 The heart of Childhood, so divine for me."²⁶³

He calls to his aid in poesy,

"Thou—
 Who from Thy fair irradiant palms
 Scatterest all love and loveliness as alms;
 Yea, Holy One,
 Who coin'st Thyself to beauty for the world!"²⁶⁴

and in that Beauty did he view all "love and loveliness."

It was inevitable that one of Thompson's temperament, realizing as he did the omnipresence of God in a truly Catholic and mystical sense, should emphasize that phase of spiritual experience known as purgation, and assent to the doctrine that the excellence of the moral life can be obtained only by self-renunciation; that the highest excellences of the intellectual and spiritual life can be obtained only through control of the passions and the will. In Thompson the practice of asceticism is expounded in full harmony with the teaching of the saints. Thompson was a God-smitten poet, and he did not fear to cry out the needs of "our uncourageous day." In the "Mistress of Vision" he lays down the conditions for initiation to the goal of the spirit.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, *Sister Songs*, pp. 36-37.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

XIV

"On Golgotha there grew a thorn,
Round the long-figured Brows,
Mourn, O mourn!
For the wine, have we the spine? Is
This all the Heaven allows?

XV

On Calvary there shook a spear;
Press the point into thy heart—
Joy and fear!
All the spines upon the thorn into curling tendrils start."

If you seek the "Land of Luthany," then

"Pierce thy heart to find the key;
With thee take
Only what none else would keep,
Learn to dream when thou dost wake,
Learn to wake when thou dost sleep,
Learn to water joy with tears,
Learn from fears to vanquish fears;
To hope, for thou dar'st not despair,
Exult, for that thou dar'st not grieve;
Plough thou the rock until it bear;
Die, for none other way canst live.

When thy seeing blindest thee,
To what thy fellow mortals see;
Their living, death; their light, most lightless;
Search no more
Pass the gates of Luthany, tread the region Elenore."²⁶⁵

Neither the pages of the *Imitation*, nor those of St. John of the Cross, furnish a more powerful exposition of "ascesis" than we find in this twentieth century poet, for he is of the twentieth rather than the nineteenth century. The doctrine of renunciation is writ large across his poetry. In "Any Saint" he says,

"Compost of Heaven and mire,
Slow foot and swift desire,
Lo
To have Yes, choose No;
Gird, and thou shalt unbind;
Seek not, and thou shalt find;
To eat
Deny thy meat;
And thou shalt be fulfilled
With all sweet things unwilling."²⁶⁶

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, *Mistress of Vision*, ed. cit., Vol. II, p. 7.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, *Any Saint*, ed. cit., Vol. II, p. 49.

Again he sings,

"Bliss in extreme befits thee not, until
Thou'rt not extreme in bliss; be equal still.
Sweets to be granted think thyself unmeet
Till thou have learned to hold sweet not too sweet."²⁶⁷

He himself had learned the lesson:

"I witness call the austere goddess Pain,
If I have learned her sad and solemn scroll;
Have I neglected her high sacrifice,
Spared my heart's children to the sacred knife,
Or turned her customary footing from my soul,
Yea, thou pale Astorath who rul'st my life,
Of all my offerings thou hast had the whole,
One after one they passed at thy desire
To sacrificial sword, or sacrificial fire."²⁶⁸

The utter incapacity of a soul, destined to the heights of spiritual life, to resist, is expressed in,

"Not my will shudders, but my flesh,
In awful secrecy to hear
The wind of thy great teaching sweep afresh
Athwart my face, and agitate my hair.
Thy ultimate unnerving dearness take
The extreme right of abnegation make,
And sum in one all renderings that were."²⁶⁹

Coventry Patmore, writing of Thompson, says, "Of the glorification and supernatural invigoration of all the human passions by control and continence, the many know nothing. They go on burning the powder of human force in dishes, instead of in gun-barrels, and in their estimate of life, they mistake wasteful blaze for effectual energy. Mr. Thompson's poetry is spiritual almost to a fault but since it is a real ardour, and not the mere negation of life which passes with most people for spirituality, it seems somewhat ungracious to complain of its predominance."²⁷⁰ He knew better, however, than "to make his religion the direct subject of any of his poems, unless it presents itself to him as a human passion, and the most human of passions, as it does in the splendid ode in which God's long pursuit and final conquest of the resisting soul is described in a torrent of as humanely impressive verse as was ever inspired by natural affection."²⁷¹

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, *Laus Amoris Doloris*, ed. cit., Vol. II, p. 122.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

²⁷⁰ Patmore, *Fortnightly Review*, January, 1904.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*

Thompson has given us the only true solution of the life-problem, in the "Hound of Heaven" the veritable epos of the soul. He presents the Catholic view in verse that will live, as the *Imitation* presents it in immortal prose, and as David sang it round centuries ago. "There is no true liberty, no solid joy, but in the fear of God with a good conscience." The "Hound of Heaven" is sound theology informed and transformed by imagination.²⁷² It is the most entirely mystical of Thompson's poems. In bold and daring metaphor, with terrible vividness, and in phrase of haunting music, it pictures for us the everlasting quest of the soul for happiness, and the everlasting quest of the Creator for the creature. The idea of the love chase was not unknown to the mystics of the middle ages.²⁷³ The Voice of Love said to Mechtilde of Magdeburg, "I have chased thee, for this was my pleasure; I captured thee for this was my desire; I bound thee, and I rejoice in thy bonds; I have wounded thee, that thou may'st be united to me. If I gave thee blows it was that I might be possessed of thee."²⁷⁴ The poem tells of one who fled from preventing Love to seek for happiness in creatures, but found it not.

"I pleaded, outlaw wise,
By many a heated casement, curtained red,
Trellised with intertwining charities:
(For, though I know His love followed
Yet was I sore adread
Lest having Him, I must have naught beside.)
But, if one casement parted wide
The gust of his approach would clash it to.

I tempted all his servitors, but to find
Mine own betrayal in their constancy
In faith to him, their fickleness to me.

Fear wist not to evade, as Love wist to pursue"

and still with "unperturbèd pace" came on the following feet,
and above their beat sounded a voice,

"Naught shelters thee, who will not shelter Me."²⁷⁵

²⁷² Cf. O'Donnell, *Francis Thompson: a critical essay*, Notre Dame University Press, 1906.

²⁷³ Underhill, *Op. cit.*, pp. 158-162.

²⁷⁴ *Das Fließende Licht der Gottheit*, Pt. I, Cap. III.

²⁷⁵ Thompson, *The Hound of Heaven*, ed. cit., Vol. I, p. 108.

He turns to children—"surely they at least are for me," but no!

"just as their young eyes grow sudden fair,
With dawning answers, then
Their angel plucked them by the hair."

Human love has failed, but Nature will be true;

"Let me greet you lip to lip,
Let me twine with your caresses,
Wantoningly
With our Lady Mother's vagrant tresses
Banqueting
With her in the wind-walled palace,
Underneath her azured dais,
Quaffing as your taintless way is,
From a chalice
Luscent-weeping out of the day spring;" ²⁷⁶

He became one in delicate fellowship with Nature—he learned all her secrecies—he made her moods the shapers of his own.

"With them joyed or was bereaven,
I was heavy with the even,
When she lit her glimmering tapers
Round the day's dead sanctities." ²⁷⁷

He laughed in the morning's eyes, and, most potent force to form a bond,

"Heaven and I wept together" ²⁷⁸

Against the red throb of its sunset heart
I laid my own to beat,
And share commingling heat;
But not by that, by that was eased my human smart!

For ah! we know not what each other says,
These things and I; in sound I speak,
Their sound is but their stir, they speak by silences." ²⁷⁹

How different is this from "Nature never did betray the heart that loved her." ²⁸⁰

"Naked I wait Thy love's uplifted stroke"—
all is sacrificed, all save self:

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

²⁸⁰ Wordsworth, *Lines on Tintern Abbey*.

"In the rash lustihead of my young powers,
I shook the pillaring hours
And pulled my life upon me;"

man is a power unto himself, is not this the teaching of the modern world—but he finds such has not been the lesson of the ages:

"I stand amid the dust of the mounded years,
My mangled youth lies dead beneath the heap."²⁸¹

Eminently unreliable is the boasted apotheosis of human friendship, equally insufficient the aesthetic appreciation of nature, and foolish the claims of impersonal idealism: all three are

"cords of all too weak account
For earth, with heavy griefs nonplussed."²⁸²

The "linked fantasies," the thoughts of poesy that seem to make the earth an enchanted toy are fading away; the innermost sanctuary of his own mind is despoiled: the soul might ask,

"Why, after wounding
This heart, hast Thou not healed it?
And why, after stealing it,
Hast Thou thus abandoned it?"²⁸³

In the following lines,

"Ah! is Thy love indeed
A weed, albeit an amaranthine weed,
Suffering no flowers except its own to mount?"²⁸⁴

there is an echo of St. Teresa's naïve complaint,

"Lord, if you treat all of your friends thus, no wonder you have so few."

And now the poet contemplates in pity his alienated self,

"Ah! must
Designer infinite!
Ah! must Thou char the wood ere Thou canst limn
with it?"²⁸⁵

but the mood is vanishing:

"And now my heart is as a broken fount,
Wherein tear-drippings stagnate, spill down ever
From the dark thoughts that shine
Upon the sighful branches of my mind.
Such is; what is to be?"²⁸⁶

²⁸¹ Thompson, *Hound of Heaven*, ed. cit., 111.

²⁸² *Ibid.*

²⁸³ St. John of the Cross, *A Spiritual Canticle*, Stan. IX, p. 7.

²⁸⁴ Thompson, *Hound of Heaven*, ed. cit., p. 111.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

The shadows are to give place to reality, and he recognizes the One in whose everlasting arms he is to find peace.

"I dimly guess what Time in mists confounds;
Yet, ever and anon a trumpet sounds
From the hid battlements of Eternity:
Those shaken mists a space unsettle, then
Round the half-glimpsed turrets slowly wash again,
But not ere Him who summoneth
I first have seen."²⁸⁷

Critics have found in this poem a complete synthesis of the movements of English thought in the present day. In the first eight lines:

"I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;
I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways
Of my own mind; and in the mist of tears
I hid from Him, and under running laughter:
Up vistaed hopes, I sped;
And shot precipitated,
Adown Titanic glooms of chasmèd fears,"²⁸⁸

are suggested the reconstruction of history through the formative ideas of induction and development: the separation as a distinct study or science of psychology, whose work is generally agreed to be of the most vital importance to knowledge and religion together; and the alternative optimism and pessimism which, in turn and at times side by side, have dominated our literature, art, music, and philosophy. In the stanzas that follow the failure of impersonal idealism, the dark stagnation of that peculiarly modern tendency to self analysis, and the domination over all of the figure whom all science and all philosophy seek to explain—the only efficacy of this Victim, this saving Victim, find fit and true expression. The strength of the synthesis lies in its comprehension that love of Nature, home life, and idealism, if they are to actualize in right living, are not to be separated from, but included in, the Christ-life.²⁸⁹

"All which I took from thee I did but take
Not for thy harms,
But just that thou might'st seek it in My arms.
All which thy child's mistake
Fancies as lost, I have stored up for thee at home."²⁹⁰

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

²⁸⁹ Cf. Cock, *Op. cit.*, p. 263.

²⁹⁰ Thompson, *Hound of Heaven*, ed. cit., p. 112.

The last stanza offers the solution of all,

"Is my gloom after all
Shade of His hand outstretched caressingly?
Ah, fondest, blindest, weakest,
I am He whom thou seekest!
Thou drav'st love from thee, who drav'st Me."²⁹¹

The beauty sought was not the visible tangible beauty of Nature, neither was it the beauty of children, lovely as the flowers, but it was the invisible, intangible, inapprehensible Beauty whose quest his faith told him was not a vain one.

The "Hound of Heaven" pictures the "via purgativa." In that beautiful little poem, "In No Strange Land," found among Thompson's papers, and published after his death, we see that he had at least a glimpse of the "via illuminativa,"

"O world invisible, we view thee,
O world intangible, we touch thee,
O world unknowable, we know thee.

Yea, in the night, my Soul, my daughter,
Cry,—clinging Heaven by the hems;
And lo, Christ walking on the water
Not of Genesareth, but of Thames!"²⁹²

Thompson "came to feel the futility of all writings save such as were explicitly a confession of faith; and also of faithfulness to the institutional side of religion, the Church and the organized means of grace. . . . The sanity of his mysticism is the great value of it to the present generation. A high individual experiencing of purgation, illumination, and union, a quiet constancy in the corporate life, and discipleship as well as leadership: what combination more needed than this for our day?"²⁹³

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

²⁹² Thompson, *In No Strange Land*, quoted in Cock, *Op. cit.*, p. 277.

²⁹³ Meynell, *Op. cit.*, p. 202.

CONCLUSION

Mysticism is more a temper of mind than a doctrine: rather an atmosphere than a definite system of philosophy. The mystic bases his belief not on a demonstrated fact, but on feeling, and as feeling is the basis of poetry, the connection between this form of thought and poetry is necessarily close. There is a tinge of mystical thought in nearly all the greater poetry of the nineteenth century. This is not strange when we consider the spirit of the age. In the history of world-thought we have ever recurring periods of atheism and pantheism: of materialism and idealism: of intellectualism and pietism. The eighteenth century was essentially an age of atheism, of materialism, of intellectualism. It was a self-styled "Age of Enlightenment," and its light was the cold white light of reason. It refused to believe that half-tones are sometimes more productive of true vision than the blinding light of mid-day. "It insisted on abolishing mystery, and it regarded as mystery everything which was not finite, everything which could not be set by itself and clearly pictured by the sensuous imagination or defined by logical understanding. It favored a way of thinking which was clear and definite, but at the same time deficient in depth and suggestiveness."²⁹⁴ Then came the reaction. It was Immanuel Kant who first turned the tide of thought in the opposite direction, and sought to substitute the vital and the spiritual for the mechanical; for division and isolation the essential unity of consciousness.

The influence of this change of thought was evident in the German transcendental school of philosophy, and affected English literature through Coleridge, whose mysticism resulted from a study of Kant and of the writings of Jakob Boehme. De Quincey, in that wonderful inner life of thought and vision of which he has given us such vivid flashes; Shelley, in *Prometheus Unbound*, where Asia is the incarnation of that ideal sought by the poet, but never found, the "shadow of that beauty unbeheld" which tantalized him in the transitory gleams vouchsafed him, and the baffled search for which *Alastor* and *Epipsychidion* reflect, both display the influence of a monistic idealism akin to Wordsworth,

²⁹⁴ Caird, Edward. *The Critical Philosophy of Immanuel Kant*, Vol. I, p. 46, New York, 1889.

but aesthetic rather than moral. Keats, though he lacked the spiritual tone, and the clear perception of abstract beauty which marks Shelley's verse, shared with the latter a tendency toward pantheistic mysticism.

In Matthew Arnold and Arthur Hugh Clough there is a mysticism devoid of actuality, a vague and vain appreciation of the older mystics, but an appreciation wanting in force and fiber. It is rather a melancholy yearning for some spiritual ideal, attainable only by a stern negation, to which they are unwilling to submit.

In Edwin Arnold's interpretation of oriental mysticism, and in Fitzgerald's translations of Persian poems, there is evident the same inclination to mystical contemplation.

Tennyson, in his admission that sense knowledge is impotent in dealing with what is beyond both sense and reason, in his insistence on the reality of the unseen, in his belief in the persistence of life, has much in common with the mystic. In the outpourings of the *Ancient Sage*, in *Vastness*, in *The Higher Pantheism*, and in the *Prologue to In Memoriam*, are passages which suggest Plotinus and Eckhart.

Browning, who voiced at once the energy of the age, and its passion for self-analysis, in his assertion of the relativity of physical knowledge and its inadequacy to satisfy the mind of man,²⁹⁵ in his refusal to acknowledge an irreconcilable break between the findings of science and of religion, in his belief that love of God is the fundamental law of life,²⁹⁶ as well as in the emphasis he lays on the fact that intellectual knowledge and artistic insight do not work for the betterment of man when the cultivation of the emotional side of his nature is neglected,²⁹⁷ and in his consideration of the problem of evil,²⁹⁸ gives proof of a peculiarly mystical bent of mind.

One of the grave dangers of mysticism has ever been the inclination to become a passing fashion, a vague dream, an incentive to high aspirations, not invariably accompanied by good deeds.

This type of mysticism,²⁹⁹ emanating from the school represented

²⁹⁵ Cf. *Asolando*.

²⁹⁶ Cf. *Rabbi ben Ezra*, *Paracelsus*.

²⁹⁷ Cf. *My Last Duchess*.

²⁹⁸ Cf. *The Ring and the Book*.

²⁹⁹ Cf. Charbonnel Victor, *Les Mystiques dans la littérature présente*, Paris, 1897.

by Baudelaire, Huysmans, Maeterlinck, and Tolstoi, was not without its representatives in English literature. Among the poets more or less imbued with this spirit are William Morris, Arthur Symonds, an exception must be made in favor of his translation of the *Obras Espirituales* of St. John of the Cross, and Richard Le Gallienne.

Fortunately this movement was counteracted by the more healthy tone of Coventry Patmore, of Lionel Johnson and of Gerard Hopkins, and above all, by Francis Thompson, who represents a form of mysticism not wholly pleasing to the neo-pagan and the dreamer, but of infinite worth as an invigorator of life.

In the study here presented, Wordsworth stands as a type of nature-mystic, with an undetermined leaning toward pantheism: Rossetti represents the trend of mind that seeks satisfaction for its highest needs in the contemplation of ideal beauty: Patmore would make human love a stepping-stone to the divine, and Thompson sought his inspiration in revealed religion.

So through the changes from naturalism to romanticism, from materialism to idealism which marked the century "That rose 'midst dust of a down-tumbled world,"³⁰⁰ and died,

"With rumor on the air
Of preparation
For a more ample devastation
And death of ancient fairness no more fair,"³⁰¹

the mind of man, through mists of error and faint gleams of light, turned ever eagerly toward God, and the Endless and the Unbegun.

³⁰⁰ Thompson, Francis, *The Nineteenth Century*.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*

BIBLIOGRAPHY

A—Philosophical and Religious References.

B—Literary References.

A—PHILOSOPHICAL AND RELIGIOUS REFERENCES.

- AUGUSTINE, SAINT. *Confessions*, edited by J. Gibb and M. Montgomery. Cambridge, 1908.
Confessions translated by Pusey. London, 1907.
- AZARIAS, BROTHER. *Essays Miscellaneous*. Chicago, 1896.
Philosophy of Literature. Philadelphia, 1879.
- BALDWIN, J. M. *History of Psychology*. London, 1913.
- BASCOM, John. *Science, Philosophy and Religion*. Boston, 1871.
- BENSON, R. H. *Mysticism*. (Westminster Lectures.) London, 1907.
- BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX, SAINT. *Opera*. Migne, P. L. Paris, 1844 seq.
Life and Works, edited by Dom. J. Mabillon, O.S.B. London, 1889.
- BLEWETT, J. *The Study of Nature and the Vision of God*. Toronto, 1907.
- BONAVENTURE, SAINT. *Opuscula Varicii ad Theologiam Mysticam*. Quaracchi, 1898.
- CATHOLIC ENCYCLOPEDIA. New York, 1907-1914.
 Articles, Dionysius, the Pseudo-Areopagite, by Joseph Stiglmayr.
 Gertrude of Nivelles, by Michael Ott.
 Hildegard, Saint, by Francis Mersham.
 Mectilde of Hackerborn, by Gertrude Casanova.
 Mectilde of Magdeburg, by Michael Ott.
 Molinos, by Antonio Perez Goyena.
 Mysticism, by George M. Sauvage.
 Quietism, by E. A. Pace.
- CORDERIUS. *Dorothei Institutiones Asceticæ*. Prægae, 1726.
- COUSIN, VICTOR. *Du Vrai, du Beau et du Bien*. Paris, 1881.
- DELACROIX, H. *Essai sur le Mysticisme Speculatif en Allemagne au XIV Siècle*. Paris, 1900.
Études d' Histoire et de Psychologie du Mysticisme. Paris, 1908.
- DIONYSII AREOPAGITAE OPERA. Migne, P. G. Paris, 1857.
- DICTIONNAIRE ENCYCLOPÉDIQUE DE LA THÉOLOGIE CATHOLIQUE. Paris, 1862.
- ECKHART. *Meister Eckhart's Sermons*, translated by Field. London, 1909.
- ERDMANN, B. *History of Philosophy*, translated by Hough. London, 1890.

- EUCKEN, RUDOLPH.** *The Meaning and Value of Life*, translated by L. J. and W. R. Boyce Gibson. London, 1909.
- FRANCIS OF ASSISI, SAINT.** *The Lives of St. Francis of Assisi* by Brother Thomas of Celano, translated by Howell. London, 1908.
- Writings of St. Francis of Assisi with Introduction* by Father Paschal Robinson, O.F.M. London, 1906.
- GARDNER, EDMUND.** *The Cell of Self-Knowledge: Seven Old English Mystical Works.* London, 1910.
- GERSONII JOANNIS, OPERA.** *Mysticam Theologiam.* Paris, 1606.
- GÖRRES.** *Die Christliche Mystik.* Regensburg, 1842.
- HARNACK, ADOLF.** *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity.* New York, 1908.
- HILDEGARDE, SAINT.** *Opera Omnia*, Migne, P. L., t. 197. Paris, 1855.
- HILTON, WALTER.** *The Scale of Perfection*, edited with an Introduction by Father Dalgairns. London, 1870.
- HUGH OF ST. VICTOR.** *Opera Omnia.* Migne, P. L., t. 175-177. Paris, 1854.
- INGE, W. R.** *Christian Mysticism (Bampton Lectures).* London, 1899.
- Studies of English Mystics.* London, 1905.
- JAMES, WILLIAM.** *Varieties of Religious Experience.* London, 1902.
- JOLY, HENRI.** *Psychologie des Saints.* Paris, 1895.
- JOHN OF THE CROSS, SAINT.** *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, translated by Lewis. London, 1906.
- The Dark Night of the Soul*, translated by Lewis. London, 1908.
- A Spiritual Canticle of the Soul*, translated by Lewis. London, 1911.
- JULIAN OF NORWICH.** *Revelations of Divine Love*, edited by Warrack. London, 1901.
- LAMBALLE.** *Mystical Contemplation*, translated by Mitchell. New York, 1913.
- LEJEUNE, P.** *An Introduction to the Mystical Life*, translated by Basil Levett. London, 1915.
- LEWIS, DAVID.** *The Life of St. John of the Cross.* London, 1897.
- MATURIN, B. W.** *Some Principles and Practices of the Spiritual Life.* London, 1907.
- MECTILDE OF MAGDEBURG.** *Fliessende Licht der Gottheit.* Regensburg, 1869.
- MIGNE.** *Dictionnaire La Mystique Chrétienne.* Paris, 1847.
- PLOTINUS.** *Enneads*, translated by Taylor. London, 1817.
- POULAIN, A.** *The Graces of Interior Prayer*, translated by L. L. Y. Smith. London, 1911.
- PREGIER, JOHANN WILHELM.** *Geschichte der deutschen Mystik im Mittelalter.* Leipzig, 1874.
- RECEJAC, E.** *Essays on the Bases of Mystic Knowledge*, translated by Sara Carr Upton. London, 1899.

- RIBET, J. *La Mystique Divine*. Paris, 1879.
- ROBINSON, A. M. F. *End of the Middle Ages*. London, 1889.
- SAUDREAU. *La Vie d' Union à Dieu*. Paris, 1900.
- L'État Mystique*. Paris, 1903.
- La Voie qui mène à Dieu*. Paris, 1904.
- SHAIRP, J. C. *Culture and Religion*. Cambridge, 1872.
- SHARPE, A. B. *Mysticism: Its True Nature and Value*. London, 1910.
- STEELE. *Anchoresses of the West, with a Preface on Mysticism by Very Rev. Vincent McNabb, O.P.* London, 1903.
- STEINER, RUDOLF. *Die Mystik im Aufgange des neuseitlichen Geisteslebens und ihr Verhältniss zu modernen Weltanschauungen*. Berlin, 1901.
- STÖCKL, A. *Lehrbuch der Geschichte der Philosophie*. Mainz, 1888.
- TERESA, SAINT. *Life Written by Herself*, translated by Lewis. London, 1906.
- The Way of Perfection*, translated by Dalton. London, 1857.
- The Interior Castle*, translated by the Benedictines of Stanbrook. London, 1906.
- Lettres de Sainte Thérèse de Jésus*, trad. par Gregoire de Saint Joseph. Paris, 1900.
- TERTULLIAN. *Liber Apologeticus*. Lipsiae, 1839.
- THOROLD, ALGAR. *An Essay in Aid of a Better Appreciation of Catholic Mysticism*. London, 1900.
- The Divine Dialogue of St. Catherine of Sienna*, translated with Preface on Mysticism. London, 1903.
- TURNER, WILLIAM. *History of Philosophy*. New York, 1903.
- UNDERHILL, EVELYN. *Mysticism*. London, 1911.
- VAUGHAN, R. A. *Hours with the Mystics*. London, 1880.
- WEBER. *History of Philosophy*, translated by Thilly. New York, 1896.
- WELCH, ALICE KEMP. *Of Six Medieval Women*. London, 1913.

MAGAZINE ARTICLES

- ALLEN, G. W. "A Plea for Mysticism," *Hibbert Journal*, III, 271 ff. January, 1905.
- AUSTIN, ALFRED. "Philosophy of the Greater Poets," *Independent*, LIV, 2505. October, 1902.
- BRAGON, C. "The New Mysticism," *Reader*, IV, 189. July, 1904.
- CONWAY, S. J. "The Nature of Catholic Mysticism," *American Catholic Quarterly*, XXX, p. 685. October, 1905.
- DEWEY, JOHN. "Poetry and Philosophy," *Andover Review*, XVI, 105. August, 1891.
- ELTON, O. "A Note on Mysticism," *Fortnightly*, LXXXII, 462. September, 1904.

- FENN, W. W. "Possibilities of Mysticism in Modern Thought," *New World*, VI, 201. June, 1897.
- MATTHEWS, W. R. "Mysticism and the Life of the Spirit," *Church Quarterly Review*, LXXXVII, 323. January, 1914.
- MORRIS, MARTIN. "The Philosophy of Poetry," *Nineteenth Century*, XLVI, 504. September, 1899.
- PERRY, RALPH BARTON. "Poetry and Philosophy," *Philosophical Review*, XI, 591. November, 1902.
- "Saints, Mystics and Heroes," *Living Age*, CCLXXXI, 625. June 6, 1914.
- TURNER, WILLIAM. "The Personality of God," *Catholic University Bulletin*, XIX, 167. March, 1913.

B—LITERARY REFERENCES

- ARISTOTLE. *Poetics*, translated by Butcher. London, 1902.
- ARNOLD, MATTHEW. *Essays in Criticism*. London, 1886.
- AUSTIN, ALFRED. *The Poetry of the Period*. London, 1904.
- BAGEHOT, WALTER. *Literary Studies*. London, 1879.
- BEECHING, H. C. *Two Lectures introductory to the study of Poetry*. Cambridge University Press, 1901.
- BEERS, HENRY A. *A History of English Romanticism in the Nineteenth Century*. New York, 1899.
- BENSON, A. C. *Rossetti*. New York, 1904.
- BIESE, ALFRED. *Die Entwicklung des Naturgefühls im Mittelalter und in der Neuzeit*. Leipsic, 1888.
- BOSANQUET, BERNARD. *A History of Aesthetic*. New York, 1892.
- BRADLEY, A. C. *Oxford Lectures on Poetry*. London, 1907.
- BRANDES, GEORGE. *Main Currents in Nineteenth Century Literature: Naturalism in England*. New York, 1902.
- BRIMLEY, G. *Essays*. London, 1882.
- BROWNING, ROBERT. *The Poet, Objective and Subjective*. London, 1911.
- BROOKE, S. *Theology in the English Poets*. London, 1874.
- Religion in Literature and Religion in Life. New York, 1901.
- Four Victorian Poets: a study of Clough, Arnold, Rossetti, Morris. London, 1908.
- BUCHANAN, ROBERT. *The Fleishy School of Poetry and other Phenomena of the Day*. London, 1872.
- BUTCHER, S. H. *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Arts*. London, 1902.
- CAINE, T. H. *Recollections of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*. London, 1882.
- CAIRD, EDWARD. *Essays on Literature and Philosophy*. Glasgow, 1892.
- CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE. London, 1907-1915.

- CAREY, ELIZABETH LUTHER. *The Rossettis: Dante Gabriel and Christina*. London, 1900.
- CHAMPNEYS, BASIL. *Memoirs and Correspondence of Coventry Patmore*. London, 1900.
- CHARLIER, GUSTAVE. *Le Sentiment de la nature chez les romantiques français*. Paris, 1912.
- CLOUGH, ARTHUR H. *Prose Remains*. London, 1869.
- COLERIDGE, S. T. *Biographia Literaria*. London, 1903.
- COURTHOPE, WILLIAM JOHN. *Life in Poetry: Law in Taste*. London, 1913.
- DAWSON, W. J. *Makers of Poetry*. New York, 1902.
- DE VERE, AUBREY. *Essays, Chiefly on Poetry*. London, 1887.
- DE QUINCY. *Essays on the Poets and Other English Writers*. Boston, 1865.
- DOWDEN, EDWARD. *Studies in Literature*. London, 1882.
- Transcripts and Studies*. London, 1896.
- DUNN, HENRY TREFFLY. *Recollections of Dante Gabriel Rossetti and his circle*. London, 1904.
- ECKERMANN, J. P. *Gespräche mit Goethe*. Leipzig, 1902.
- FAIRCHILD, A. H. *The Making of Poetry*. New York, 1912.
- FORMAN, H. BUXTON. *Our Living Poets*. London, 1871.
- FORSYTH, P. F. *Religion in Recent Art*. London, 1901.
- GANZENMÜLLER, WILHELM. *Das Naturgefühl in Mittelalter*. Leipzig, 1914.
- GATES, LEWIS EDWARDS. *Studies and Appreciations*. New York, 1900.
- GOSSE, EDMUND. *Coventry Patmore*. London, 1905.
- HAZLITT, WILLIAM. *Sketches and Essays: Winterslow*. London, 1902.
- My First Acquaintance with Poets*. London, 1902.
- HERFORD, CHARLES H. *Age of Wordsworth*. London, 1897.
- HUTTON, R. H. *Essays in Literary Criticism*. Philadelphia, 1876.
- INNES, A. D. *Seers and Singers*. London, 1903.
- KNIGHT, JOSEPH. *Dante Gabriel Rossetti*. London, 1887.
- LEGOUIS, EMILE. *La Jeunesse de William Wordsworth*. Paris, 1896.
- Translated by J. W. Matthews*. London, 1897.
- MABIE, H. W. *Essays in Literary Interpretation*. New York, 1900.
- MACKAIL, J. W. *Lectures on Greek Poetry*. London, 1910.
- Lectures on Poetry*. London, 1911.
- MARILLIER, H. C. *Rossetti*. London, 1906.
- MASSON, DAVID. *Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats and other Essays*. London, 1856.
- MEYNELL, ALICE. *The Rhythm of Life and other Essays*. London, 1896.
- MEYNELL, WILFRID. *Life of Francis Thompson*. New York, 1913.
- MYERS, F. W. H. *Essays Modern*. London, 1883.
- Life of Wordsworth*. New York, 1887.

- NETTLESHIP, R. L. *The Moral Influence of Literature*. London, 1890.
- NICHOLSON, P. W. *Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Poet and Painter*. Edinburgh, 1886.
- O'CONNOR, J. F. X., S.J. *A Study of Francis Thompson*, New York, 1912.
- O'DONNELL, CHARLES, C.S.C. *Francis Thompson: a critical essay*. Notre Dame University Press, 1906.
- OZANAM, FREDERICK. *The Franciscan Poets in Italy of the Thirteenth Century*, translated by A. E. Nellen and N. C. Craig. New York, 1915.
- PALLEN, CONDÉ. *Epochs of Literature*. St. Louis, 1897.
Philosophy of Literature. St. Louis, 1898.
- PAYNE, WILLIAM MORTON. *The Greater Poets of the Nineteenth Century*. New York, 1907.
- PATER, WALTER. *Appreciations*. New York, 1889.
- PATMORE, COVENTRY. *Principles in Art*. London, 1889.
Poems. London, 1906.
Religio Poetae. London, 1905.
The Rod, the Root, and the Flower. London, 1895.
- POSNETT, H. M. *Comparative Literature*. New York, 1886.
- PUGHE, F. H. *Studien über Byron und Wordsworth*. Heidelberg, 1902.
- RANNIE, D. W. *Wordsworth and His Circle*. London, 1907.
- RALEIGH, W. *Wordsworth*. London, 1903.
- ROSSETTI, DANTE GABRIEL. *Complete Works*, edited with preface and notes by William M. Rossetti. London, 1905.
Complete Poetical Works. Boston, 1903.
Hand and Soul. Reprinted from "The Germ." Portland, Me., 1900.
Letters to William Allingham. New York, 1897.
- ROSSETTI, WILLIAM MICHAEL. *Memoir in Dante Gabriel Rossetti: His Family Letters*. Boston, 1895.
Dante Gabriel Rossetti as Designer and Writer. London, 1889.
Rossetti Papers, 1862 to 1870. London, 1913.
Pre-Raphaelite Diaries and Letters. London, 1900.
- SAINTSBURY, GEORGE. *The Later Nineteenth Century*. Edinburgh and London, 1907.
- SANTAYANA, GEORGE. *The Sense of Beauty*. New York, 1896.
Interpretation of Poetry and Religion. New York, 1900.
- SHAIRP, J. C. *Poetic Interpretation of Nature*. New York, 1877.
Aspects of Poetry. New York, 1891.
Poetry and Philosophy. New York, 1872.
- SHARP, WILLIAM. *Dante Gabriel Rossetti: A Record and a Study*. London, 1882.
- SNEATH, WILLIAM. *Wordsworth: Poet of Nature and Poet of Man*. Boston, 1912.

- SPURGEON, C. F. E. *Mysticism in English Literature*. New York, 1913.
- STEDMAN, EDMUND CLARENCE. *Nature and Elements of Poetry*. New York, 1892.
- Victorian Poets. Boston, 1876.
- STEPHEN, LESLIE. *Hours in a Library*. New York, 1899.
- STEPHENS, F. G. *Dante Gabriel Rossetti*. London, 1905.
- STRONG, A. H. *The Great Poets and their Theology*. Philadelphia, 1897.
- SWINBURNE, ALGERNON C. *Essays and Studies*. London, 1875.
- TIREBUCK, WILLIAM EDWARDS. *Dante Gabriel Rossetti, His Work and Influence*. London, 1882.
- THOMPSON, FRANCIS. *Works edited by Meynell*. New York, 1913.
- New Poems*. Boston, 1897.
- The Hound of Heaven and Other Poems, with Preface by A. Symons*. Portland, Maine, 1908.
- Sister Songs*. London, 1895.
- TRANSACTIONS OF WORDSWORTH SOCIETY, 1880-1887. *A Few Words on Wordsworth's Position as an Ethical Teacher, by the Dean of Salisbury*. No. 5, p. 39.
- Remarks on the Personal Character of Wordsworth's Poetry, by Aubrey De Vere*. No. 5, p. 13.
- On the Poetic Interpretation of Nature, by the Hon. Roden Noel*. No. 6, p. 24.
- On the Platonism of Wordsworth, by J. H. Shorthouse*. No. 6, p. 117.
- The Theism of Wordsworth, by Professor John Veitch*. No. 8, p. 24.
- WHIPPLE, E. P. *Essays and Reviews*. Boston, 1856.
- WOOD, ESTHER. *Dante Gabriel Rossetti and the Pre-Raphaelite Movement*. London, 1894.
- WOODBERRY, G. E. *Makers of Literature*. New York, 1900.
- The Inspiration of Poetry*. New York, 1910.
- WORDSWORTH, WILLIAM. *Complete Works and Life, edited by William Knight*. Edinburgh, 1882-1889.
- Poetical Works*. London, 1864.
- Complete Poetical Works, with an Introduction by John Morley*. London, 1903.
- Complete Poetical Works, with Bibliography. Cambridge Edition*, Boston and New York, 1904.
- Complete Poetical Works, Boston and New York, 1910-1911*.
- Prose Works, edited by Grossart*. London, 1876.
- Prefaces and Essays on Poetry, with Letter to Lady Beaumont*. Edited with Introduction and notes by A. J. George. Boston, 1892.
- Literary Criticism, edited by N. C. Smith*. London, 1905.

MAGAZINE ARTICLES

- BRECY, CATHERINE. "The Poetry of Francis Thompson," *Catholic World*, LXXXI, 605. August, 1905.
- COCK, A. A. "Francis Thompson," *Church Quarterly Review*, LXXXVIII, 25. April, 1914.
- "Francis Thompson," *Dublin Review*, CXLIX, 247. October, 1911.
- CUTHBERT, FATHER. "Francis Thompson," *Catholic World*, LXXXVI, 595. January, 1908.
- EARLE, J. C. "Dante Gabriel Rossetti," *Catholic World*, XIX, 263. May, 1874.
- FULLER, EDWARD. "Arnold, Newman, and Rossetti," *Critic*, XLV, 273. September, 1904.
- GERRARD, T. J. "Thompson, the Poet," *Catholic World*, LXXXVI, 613. February, 1908.
- GOSSE, EDMUND P. "Dante Gabriel Rossetti," *Century Magazine*, XXIV, 718. September, 1882.
- HOOKE, BRIAN. "Introspection and Some Recent Poetry," *Forum*, XXXIX, 522. April, 1908.
- MERRIMAN, HELEN B. "English Pre-Raphaelite and Poetical School of Painters," *Andover Review*, I, 594. June, 1884.
- MEYNELL, ALICE. "Thompson, the Poet of High Thinking," *Living Age*, CCXV, 804. December, 1907.
- MORE, P. E. "Poetry of Francis Thompson," *Nation*, LXXXV, 513. November, 1908.
- PEABODY, JOSEPHINE PRESTON. "Modern Life and Modern Poetry," *Poet Lore*, XIV, 56. January, 1903.
- SHAIRP, J. C. "Dante Gabriel Rossetti," *British Quarterly Review*, LXXVI, 109. July, 1882.
- TELFORD, A. J. "The Poet's Tragedy," *London Quarterly*, CXXI, 12. January, 1914.
- TRAILL, H. D. "The Poetry of Francis Thompson," *Nineteenth Century and After*, XXXV, 229. February, 1904.
- WATERS, F. "The Religious Element in Modern Poetry," *Catholic World*, LXXXVI, 110. October, 1905.
- WATTS-DUNTON, THEODORE. "The Truth About Rossetti," *Nineteenth Century*, XIII, 404. March 1883.
- WARREN, HERBERT. "The Poetry of the Twentieth Century," *Living Age*, 228, 660. March, 1901.
- "Swinburne, Rossetti, and Morris," *Quarterly Review*, 132, 59. January, 1872.
- "The Poetical Works of Dante Gabriel Rossetti," *Westminster Review*, XC, 55. January, 1871.
- "The Poetry of Francis Thompson," *Academy*, LI, 537. May, 1897.
- "An Appreciation of Francis Thompson," *Harper's Weekly*, 512, 1868. December, 1907.

VITA

Sister Mary Pius Neenan was born in Keokuk, Iowa, October 15, 1878. She received her elementary education in St. Vincent's Academy, in that city, and followed the high school course at St. Joseph's Academy, Saint Louis, Mo., from which institution she was graduated in 1895. In 1897 she entered the novitiate of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, St. Louis. After having pursued various normal and collegiate courses under the direction of members of her own community, she began work at the University of Missouri in 1908, and continued until the opening of the Catholic Sisters College, Catholic University of America, in 1911. She received the degree Bachelor of Arts in 1913, and that of Master of Arts in 1915. In her career as teacher she has been engaged as follows: Instructor in English, Academy of Our Lady, Peoria, Ill.; Principal of the Redemptorist High School, Kansas City, Mo.; Principal of the Diocesan High School for Girls, St. Louis; Instructor in English, St. Joseph's Academy, St. Louis.

The years 1912-1913, 1914-1915, 1915-1916, have been spent in residence at the Catholic Sisters College, Catholic University of America. In her graduate work the principal courses followed have been those under Mr. J. B. O'Connor, Ph.D., Reverend E. A. Pace, S.T.D., and Reverend William Turner, S.T.D. The writer is happy to have this opportunity to express her deep appreciation of the work done under these instructors and in particular to acknowledge gratefully the kindly assistance and encouragement given by Reverend William Turner, S.T.D., under whose direction this dissertation was written.

This book should be returned to
the Library on or before the last date
stamped below.

A fine of five cents a day is incurred
by retaining it beyond the specified
time.

Please return promptly.

DUE NOV 20 1923

DUE OCT 20 1923

~~MAR 20 1941~~

~~NOV 16 '64 H~~

399739

